PSYCHANODIA I

ÉTUDES PRÉLIMINAIRES AUX RELIGIONS ORIENTALES DANS L'EMPIRE ROMAIN

PUBLIÉES PAR

M. J. VERMASEREN

TOME QUATRE-VINGT-DIX-NEUVIÈME

IOAN PETRU CULIANU

PSYCHANODIA I

LEIDEN
E. J. BRILL
1983

IOAN PETRU CULIANU

PSYCHANODIA I

A SURVEY OF THE EVIDENCE CONCERNING THE ASCENSION OF THE SOUL AND ITS RELEVANCE

LEIDEN
E. J. BRILL
1983

ISBN 90 04 06903 8

Copyright 1983 by E. J. Brill, Leiden, The Netherlands

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or translated in any form, by print, photoprint, microfilm, microfiche or any other means without written permission from the publisher

PRINTED IN THE NETHERLANDS

Patri martino dicatus

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements IX
Bibliography XI

Introduction 1

PART ONE

A Delimination of the Phenomenon and a Critical Survey of the Modern Historiography

I. Delimitation and Morphology of the Phenomenon 5
II. A Historical Fallacy: The Theories of the "religionsgeschichtliche Schule" 16
III. A Challenge: The Theory of the Greek Origins 24

PART TWO

A Historical Survey of the Principal problems Relating to the Ascension of the Soul

IV. The Origins of the Apocalyptic Genre 35
V. The Celestial Eschatology and its Transformations 40
VI. The Myths of Plutarch 43
VII. The Passage of the Soul through the Spheres 48
VIII. From the Jewish Apocalypses to the mi'raj 55
IX. Problems concerning the Medieval Apocalypses 58

Notes 63

Index nominum rerumque
I. Auctores moderni 77
II. Auctores antiqui 78
III. Alia nomina 79
IV. Res 80

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The first volume of this book represents an entirely transformed and revised English version of our Sorbonne dissertation "Expériences de l'extase et symboles de l'ascension, de l'Hellénisme à l'Islam"[1]. It is meant to present an up to date *status quaestionis* concerning the "Himmelsreise der Seele" in Late Antiquity, with peculiar emphasis on the critical discussions of modern historiography. A short bibliography will give the student of the religious history of that period the possibility to enlarge his knowledge of this rather tangled matter. The coming volumes of the *Psychanodia* (II-III) will contain texts, translations and commentaries related to the "Himmelsreise". The texts will be mainly Latin and Greek, but possibly - if ever our philological tools will stand it - also Coptic and Jewish, at least in translation. As far as the extremely important Arabic material is concerned, we hope that one day an Arabist might follow our modest beginnings and collect all the Islamic traditions concerning the *isra'* and the *mi'raj* of Mohammed. The Western Medieval material would also deserve a special volume, since it derives, on the one hand, from the Jewish-Christian apocalypses, and, on the other, from the *mi'raj* legends. The work of a whole research team would be, in that case, necessary to bring forth such a project, much too heavy for a single person.

The author started in 1973 his work on the "Himmelsreise" in Late Antiquity, as a fellow of the Department for Religious Sciences of the Catholic University of Milan, under the direct supervision of Prof. Bianchi. Prof. M. Eliade has also shown a not indifferent concern for the development of the research, and has often, in Chicago and elsewhere, offered his precious and stimulating aid. In 1976, Prof. M. Meslin from the Sorbonne took over the direct supervision of the thesis. The author has to acknowledge here his great debt to the competent, subtle and patient remarks of his *rapporteur*.

From 1978 to 1980, the decisive orientation of our research was due, besided the contribution of the persons mentioned above, to the incomparable gentleness of Prof. M.J. Vermaseren, who also offered to publish the book in his series of "Études Préliminaires". Without the understanding, tolerance and patience shown by Prof. W. Noomen of the University of Groningen during the rather long period of elaboration of the dissertation, which exceeded by more than one year our too optimistic expectations, this book could not have been written. Not to forget the valuable aid received from Prof. H.J.W. Drijvers and from other Dutch or Dutch-resident scholars, such as Prof. H.-G. Kippenberg (concerning the apocalyptic writings).

During the discussion of the dissertation at the Sorbonne, Prof. L. Arnaldez has graciously corrected many mistakes of all kinds in the chapter concerning the legends of the *mi'raj*. Prof. J. Flamant, one of the few specialists in the astronomical implications of the "Himmelsreise", helped considerably to improve the matter of the chapter related to the transit of the soul through the planetary spheres.

A discussion with Prof. Gh. Gnoli has been immensely helpful to understand the

problems related to Iranian apocalyptic. New light on the *Ascension of Isaiah* has been shed by the Colloquium organized in Rome (April 1981) by U. Bianchi, Gh. Gnoli and M. Pesce.

Mrs. Jane Hampartumian took the trouble to correct the English typescript of this book.

To all the persons mentioned above, and sometimes - as in the cases of Prof. Drijvers, Prof. Eliade, Prof. Noomen and Prof. Vermaseren - to their families as well, the author wishes to express here his deepest gratitude.

Last but not least, the author's wife, whose help was not of a scholarly kind, but, nevertheless, more than effective, is entitled to share with him all the merits of this work, if it has any.

Groningen, July 19, 1981 i.p.c.

1 The discussion of the dissertation took place on June 17, 1980, before a commission composed by the following professors: L. Arnaldez, M. Eliade (honorary member), J. Flamant and M. Meslin (rapporteur).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Andrae, T., *Mohammed. Sein Leben und Sein Glaube*, Göttingen 1932.

Anz, W., *Zur Frage nach dem Ursprung des Gnostizismus. Ein religionsgeschichtliches Versuch*, Leipzig 1897.

Asin Palacios, M., *La Escatologia Musulmana en la Divina Comedia, seguida de Historia y crítica de una polémica*, Madrid-Granada 1943[2].

Bachofen, J.J., *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. VII, Basel-Stuttgart 1958.

Bar, F., *Les routes de l'autre monde. Descentes aux Enfers et voyages dans l'au-delà*, Paris 1946.

Bianchi, U., (Ed.), *The Origins of Gnosticism*, Leiden 1967.

Bianchi, U., (Ed.), *Mysteria Mithrae*, Leiden 1979.

Bianchi, U. - Vermaseren, M.J. (Eds.), *La soteriologia dei culti orientali nell'Impero Romano*, Leiden 1982

Bidez, J., *Vie de Porphyre, le philosophe néoplatonicien*, Gent 1913.

Bidez, J. - Cumont, F., *Les mages hellénisés*, 2 vols., Paris 1938.

Bietenhard, H., *Die himmlische Welt im Urchristentum und Spätjudentum*, Tübingen 1951.

Bogaert, P., *L'Apocalypse syriaque de Baruch*, 2 vols., Paris 1969.

Boll, F. - Bezold, C., - Gundel, W., *Storia dell'astrologia*. (It. transl., with a Foreword by E. Garin), Bari 1977.

Bolton, J.D.P., *Aristeas of Proconnesus*, London 1962.

Bousset, W., *Die Himmelsreise der Seele* (ARW 4/1901), (reprint), Darmstadt 1971.

Bousset, W., *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis*, Göttingen 1907.

Bousset, W., *Die Religionen des Judentums in späthellenistischen Zeitalter* (edition revised and improved by H. Gressmann), Tübingen 1926[3].

Boyancé, P., *Etudes sur le Songe de Scipion*, Paris-Bordeaux 1936.

Boyancé, P., *La religion astrale de Platon à Cicéron*, in *"Rev. Et. Grecques"* 65 (1952), pp. 312-49.

Brandt, W., *Das Schicksal der Seele nach dem Tode, nach mandäischen und parsischen Vorstellungen* (JfpTh. 18/1892). Mit einem Nachwort zum Neudruck von G. Widengren, Darmstadt 1967.

Bremmer, J., *The Early Greek Conceptions of the Soul*, Apeldoorn 1979.

Brenk, F.E., *In Mist Apparelled. Religious Themes in Plutarch's Moralia and Lives*, Leiden 1977.

Burkert, W., *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*, (Enlarged English version), Cambridge Mass. 1972.

Burkert, W., *Griechische Religion der archaïschen und klassischen Epoche*, Stuttgart 1977.

Campbell, D., *Arabian Medicine and its influences on the Middle Ages* (reprint of the 1926-edition), New York 1973.

Cerulli, E., *Il "Libro della Scala" e la questione delle fonti arabo-spagnole della Divina Commedia*, Città del Vaticano 1949.

Cerulli, E., *Nuove ricerche sul "Libro della Scala" e la conoscenza dell'Islam in Occidente*, Città del Vaticano 1972.

Charles, R.H. (Ed.), *The Greek Versions of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, Oxford 1908.

Charles, R.H., *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch*, (1912) (reprint), Jerusalem s.a.

Charles, R.H., *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (1913) (reprint) Oxford 1963-64 (2 vols.).

Collins, J.J. (Ed.), *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre* (SEMEIA 14), University of Montana, Missoula 1979.

Colpe, C., *Die religionsgeschichtliche Schule. Darstellung und Kritik ihres Bildes vom gnostischen Erlösermythus*, Göttingen 1961.

Colpe, C., *Die "Himmelsreise der Seele" ausserhalb und innerhalb der Gnosis*, in U. Bianchi (Ed.), *The Origins of Gnosticism*, pp. 429-45.
Colpe, C., *Die "Himmelsreise der Seele" als philosophie- und religionsgeschichtliches Problem*, in E. Fries (Ed.), *Festschrift J. Klein*, Göttingen 1967, pp. 85-104.
Cornford, F.M., *Principium Sapientae. The Origins of Greek Philosophical Thought*, Cambridge 1952.
Culianu, I.P., *Iter in silvis. Saggi scelti sulla gnosi e altri studi*, vol. I, Messina 1981.
Culianu, I.P., *Iatroi kai manteis. Sulle strutture dell'estatismo greco*, in *"Studi StoricoReligosi"* IV (1980), 2, 287-303.
Culianu, I.P., *Ordine e disordine delle sfere*, in *"Aevum"* LV (1981), 1, 96-110.
Culianu, I.P., *Le vol magique dans l'Antiquité Tardive. Quelques considérations*, in *"Revue de l'Histoire des Religions"* CXCVIII (1981), 1, 57-66.
Culianu, I.P., *L'"Ascension de l'Ame" dans les mystères et hors des mystères*, in U. Bianchi - M.J. Vermaseren (Eds.), *Soteriologia*, 276-307.
Cumont, F., *Astrology and Religion among the Greeks and Romans*, New York-London 1912.
Cumont, F., *After Life in Roman Paganism*, New Haven 1922.
Cumont, F., *Recherches sur le symbolisme funéraire des Romains*, Paris 1942.
Cumont, F., *Lux perpetua*, Paris 1949.
Daniélou, J., *Théologie du Judéo-Christianisme*, Tournai 1958.
Daniélou, J., *Message évangélique et culture hellénistique*, Tournai 1961.
De Faye, E., *Gnostiques et Gnosticisme. Etude critique des documents du gnosticisme chrétien aux IIe et IIIe siècles*, Paris 1925^2.
De Jong, K.H.E., *De Apuleio Isiacorum Mysteriorum Teste*, Leiden 1900.
Delatte, A., *Etudes sur la littérature phythagoricienne*, Paris 1915.
De Ley, H., *Macrobius and Numenius. A Study of Macrobius, In Somn. I, c. 12*, Bruxelles 1972.
Des Places, E., see Jamblichus, Numenius, Oracula Chaldaica.
Detienne, M., *La notion de Daïmon dans le Phythagorisme ancien*, Paris 1963.
Detienne, M., *Les origines religieuses de la notion d'intellect: Hermotime et Anaxagore*, in *"Rev. philos."* 89 (1964), pp. 167-78.
Dieterich, A., *Abraxas. Studien zur Religionsgeschichte des späteren Altertums* (1981) (reprint), Aalen 1973.
Dieterich, A., *Nekyia. Beiträge zur Erklärung der neuentdeckten Petrusapokalypse*, Leipzig 1893.
Dieterich, A., *Eine Mithrasliturgie*, (reprint of the edition 1923^3), Darmstadt 1966.
Dillon, John, *The Descent of the Soul in Middle Platonic and Gnostic Theory*, in Layton, B. (Ed.), *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism I: The School of Valentine*, Leiden 1980, pp. 357-64.
Dinzelbacher, P., *Die Jenseitsbrücke im Mittelalter*, (Diss. Univ. Wien, 104), Vienna 1973.
Dinzelbacher, P., *Die Vision Alberichs und die Esdras-Apokryphe*, in *"St. u. Mitt. zur Gesch. des Benedikt.-Ordens"* 87 (1976), pp. 435-42.
Dodds, E.R., *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Berkeley-Los Angeles 1951.
Dodds, E.R., see Proclus.
Dörrie, H., *Platonica Minora*, München 1976.
Drijvers, H.J.V., *Bardaisan of Edessa*, Assen 1966.
Drijvers, H.J.V., *Kerygma und Logos in den Oden Salomos dargestellt am Beispiel der 23. Ode*, in A.M. Ritter (Ed.), *Kerygma und Logos (Festschrift für Carl Andresen)*, Göttingen 1979, pp. 153-72.
Drijvers, H.J.V., *Cults and Beliefs at Edessa*, Leiden 1980.
Edsman, C.M., *Le baptême de feu*, Uppsala 1940.
Elferink, M.A., *La descente de l'âme d'après Macrobe* (Foreword by J.H. Waszink). Leiden 1968.
Eliade, M., *Le chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l'extase*, Paris 1968^2.
Eliade, M., *De Zalmoxis à Gengis-Khan*, Paris 1970.
Elsas, C., *Neuplatonische und gnostische Weltablehnung in der Schule Plotins*, Berlin-New York 1975.
Festugière, A.J., *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, 4 vols., Paris 1949-1954.

Festugière, A.J., *Hermétisme et mystique païenne*, Paris 1967.
Festugière, A.J., see Proclus, Nock.
Flamant, J., *Macrobe et le néo-platonisme latin, à la fin du IV^e siècle*, Leiden 1977.
Flamant, J., *Un témoin intéressant de la théorie héliocentrique d'Héraclide du Pont*, in M.B. De Boer - T.A. Edridge (Eds.), *Hommages à M.J. Vermaseren*, Leiden 1978, vol. I, pp. 381-91.
Ford, P.K., *The Mabinogi and other Welsh Tales*, Berkeley-Los Angeles 1977.
Gaster, M., *Hebrew Visions of Hell and Paradise*, in "*JRAS*" 3, London 1893, pp. 571-611.
Gignoux, Ph., *L'Enfer et le Paradis d'après les sources pehlevies*, in "*JA*" 256 (1968).
Gnoli, Gh., *Ašvan. Contributo allo studio del livro di Ardâ Wirâz*, in *Iranica*, Naples 1979, 387-452.
Gnoli, Gh., *Viaggio estatico e visione nella tradizione zoroastriana. Questioni comparative sull' Ascensione di Isaia*, in M. Pesce (Ed.), *Giornate di studio sull'Ascensione di Isaia (Rome, April 1982)*, in press.
Golden Mortimer, W., *History of Coca, "The Divine Plant" of the Incas*, (reprint) San Francisco 1974.
Gruenwald, I., *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, Leiden-Köln 1980.
Gundel, W., *Sternglaube, Sternreligion und Sternorakel. Aus der Geschichte der Astrologie*, Heidelberg 1959^2.
Gundel, W. and H.G., *Astrologumena. Die Astrologische Literatur in der Antike und ihre Geschichte*, Wiesbaden 1966.
Gwyn Griffiths, J., *Apuleios of Madauros, The Isis Book (Met. Book XI)*, Leiden 1975.
Haardt, R., *Gnosis. Character and Testimony*, Engl. tr. by J.F. Hendry, Leiden 1971.
Hani, J., *Le mythe de Timarque chez Plutarque et la structure de l'extase*, in "*Rev. Et. Gr.*" 88 (1975), pp. 105-20.
Harner, M.J. (Ed.), *Hallucinogens and Shamanism*, London-Oxford-New York 1973.
Haug, M. - West, E.W. (Eds.), *The Book of Ardâ Virâf. The Pahlavi Text* prepared by Destur Jamaspji Asa, London 1872.
Henneke, E. - Schneemelcher, W. (Eds.), *Neutestamentliche Apocryphen*, 2 vols., Tübingen 1964.
Henning, W., *Zoroaster, Politician or Witch-Doctor?*, Oxford 1951.
Hoogvliet, P., *Specimen Literarium Inaugurale de Vita et Scriptis Heraclidae Pontici*, Leiden (1858).
Jackson, K.H., *A Celtic Miscellany*, Harmondsworth 1976^2.
James, M.R., *Apocrypha Anecdota*, Cambridge 1893.
Jastrow, M., *The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, Boston 1898.
Jeanmaire, H., *Dionysos. Histoire du culte de Bacchus*, Paris 1951.
Jeremias, A., *Handbuch des altorientalischen Geisteskultur*, Leipzig 1913.
Jonas, H., *Gnostic Religion*, Boston 1963^2.
Jonas, H., *Philosophical Essays. From Ancient Creed to Technological Man*, Englewood Cliffs 1974.
Kerényi, K., *Heros Iatros. Über Wandlungen und Symbole des ärztlichen Genius in Griechenland*, in "*Eranos Jrbh.*" 12 (1945), pp. 33-54.
Kessel, A.H.M., *Studies on The Dream in Greek Literature*, Utrecht 1973.
Kroll, J., *Die Himmelfahrt der Seele in der Antike (Kölner Universitäts-Reden, 27)*, Köln 1931.
Kroll, J., *Gott und Hölle. Der Mythos vom Descensuskampfe* (1932) (reprint), Darmstadt 1963.
Lagrange, P.M.J., *Etudes sur les religions sémitiques*, Paris 1905^2.
Leemans, E.A., *Studie over den wijsgeer Numenius van Apamea met uitgave der fragmenten*, Brussels 1937.
Levi, D., *Mors voluntaria. Mystery Cults on Mosaics from Antioch*, in "*Berytos*" 7/8 (1942), 43, 19-55.
Lewis, I.M., *Ecstatic Religion. An Anthropological Study of Spirit Possession and Shamanism*, Harmondsworth (1971) 1978.
Lewy, H., *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy. Mysticism, Magic and Platonism in the later Roman Empire*, Le Caire 1956 (There is a reprint of 1978, "Etudes Augustiniennes", of this very rare book).

Lods, A., *De quelques récits de voyage au pays des morts*, in "*Comptes rendus, Acad, d'inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*", Paris 1940.
Macrobii *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis*, ed. J. Willis, Leipzig 1963.
Maier, J., *Das Gefährdungsmotiv bei der Himmelsreise in der jüdischen Apokalyptik und "Gnossis"*, in "*Kairos*" 5 (1963), pp. 18-40.
Marchand, J., *L'Autre monde au Moyen Age. Voyages et visions*, Paris 1940.
Mastandrea, P., *Un neoplatonico latino: Cornelio Labeone*, Leiden 1978.
Méautis, G., *Recherches sur le Pythagorisme*, Neuchâtel 1922.
Meuli, K., *Scythica*, in "*Hermes*" 70 (1935), pp. 121-76.
Millik, J.T., *The Books of Enoch*, Oxford 1976.
Moore, G.F., *Judaism in the first centuries of the Christian Era. The Age of the Tannaim*, 3 vols., Cambridge 1946-48.
Moraldi, L., *Apocrifi del Nuovo Testamento*, 2 vols., Torino 1971.
Nilsson, M.P., *Geschichte der griechischen Religion*, 2 vols., München 1950.
Nock, A.D. and Festugière, A.J., *Corpus Hermeticum*, vol. I, Paris 1960.
Numenius, *Fragments*, ed. by E. Des Places, Paris 1973.
Nyberg, H.S., *Die Religionen des Alten Iran*, German tr. by H.H. Schaeder, Leipzig 1938.
Olerud, A., *L'idée de Macrocosmos et de Microcosmos dans le Timée de Platon*, Uppsala 1951.
Onians, R.B;, *The Origins of European Thought*, Cambridge 1951.
Oracula Chaldaica, *Oracles chaldaïques. Avec un choix de commentaires anciens*, ed. by E. Des Places, Paris 1971.
Orbe, A., *Variaciones gnósticas sobre las alas del Alma (A proposito de Plot. II 9, 3, 18-4, 12)*, in "*Gregorianum*" 35 (1954), pp. 18-55.
Origène, *Contre Celse*, ed. and tr. by M. Borret, 4 vols., Paris 1967-69.
Palache, J., *Het heiligdom in de voorstelling der semietische volken*, Leiden 1920.
Peterson, E., *Frühkirche, Judentum, Gnosis*, Rome-Freiburg-Vienna 1959.
Piccaluga, G. (Ed.), *Perennitas. Studi in onore di Angelo Brelich*, Rome 1980.
Plutarch, *Plutarchi Liber de sera numinis vindicta. Accedit Fragmentum eidem vindicatum apud Stobaeum*, ed. D. Wyttenbach, Lugduni Batavorum 1772.
Plutarch, *Moralia*, vol. VII, e.d. by Ph. H. De Lacy and B. Einarson, London-Cambridge Mass. 1959; vol. XII, ed. by H. Cherniss and W.C. Helmbold, 1957.
Plutarch, *Le démon de Socrate*, ed. by A. Corlu, Paris 1970.
Porphyrii *Opuscula selecta*, ed. A. Nauck, Hildesheim 1963[3].
Proclus, *Commentaire sur le Timée*, tr. by A.J. Festugière, 5 vols., Paris 1966-68.
Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, ed. by E.R. Dodds, Oxford 1963[2].
Quispel, G., *Gnostic Studies*, 2 vols., Istanbul 1974-75.
Reinhardt, K., *Kosmos und Sympathie*, München 1926.
Reitzenstein, R., *Poimandres. Studien zur griechisch-ägyptischen und frühchristlichen Literatur* (reprint), Darmstadt 1966.
Reitzenstein, R., *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen nach ihren Grundgedanken und Wirkungen* (1927[3]), Stuttgart 1956.
Reitzenstein, R., *Das iranische Erlösungsmysterium*, Bonn 1921.
Reitzenstein, R., and Schaeder, H.H., *Studien zum antiken Synkretismus aus Iran und Griechenland* (1926), Darmstadt 1965.
Robinson, J.M. (Ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, Leiden 1977.
Rohde, E., *Psyche*, Eng. tr. by W.K.C. Guthrie, New York 1966.
Rougier, L., *La religion astrale des Pythagoriciens*, Paris 1959.
Rougier, L., *Celse contre les chrétiens. La réaction païenne sous l'Empire Romain*, Paris 1977.
Rowley, H.H., *The Relevance of Apocalyptic. A Study of Jewish and Christian Apocalypses from Daniel to the Revelation*, London-Redhill 1947[2].
Rudolph, K. (Ed.), *Gnosis und Gnostizismus*, Stuttgart 1975.
Russell, D.S., *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*, London 1964.
Schaeder, H.H., see Reitzenstein.
Scheftelowitz, I., *Die altpersische Religion und das Judentum. Unterscheide, Übereinstimmungen und gegenseitige Beeinflussungen*, Giessen 1920.
Schenke, H.M., *Der Gott "Mensch" in der Gnosis. Ein religionsgeschichtlicher Beitrag zur Diskussion über die paulinische Anschauung von der Kirche als Leib Christi*, Göttingen 1962.

Schmidt, C., *Gnostische schriften in koptischer Sprache aus dem Codex Brucianus*, Leipzig 1892.
Schmidt, C., and Till, W., *Koptisch-gnostische Schriften I: Die Pistis Sophia, die beiden Bücher des Jeû; Unbekanntes altgnostisches Werk*, Berlin 1954^2 (These writings have been translated into English by V. MacDermott, Leiden 1978).
Scholem, G., *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, New York 1954.
Scholem, G., *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition*, New York 1960.
Segal, A.F., *Heavenly Ascent in Hellenistic Judaism, Early Christianity, and their Environment*, in: ANRW II 23,2, hrgg. von W. Haase, Berlin-New York 1980, 1333-94.
Söderblom, N., *La Vie future d'après le Mazdéisme, à la lumière des croyances parallèles dans les autres religions. Etude d'eschatologie comparée*, Paris 1901.
Soury, G., *La démonologie de Plutarque. Essai sur les idées religieuses et les mythes d'un platonicien éclectique*, Paris 1942.
Tardieu, M., *Trois Mythes Gnostiques. Adam, Eros et les animaux d'Egypte dans un écrit de Nag Hammadi (II, 5)*, Paris 1974.
Till, W., see Schmidt, C.
Tisserant, E., *Ascension d'Isaïe. Trad. de la vers. éthiopienne, avec les principales variantes des vers. grecque, latines et slave*, Paris 1909.
Turcan, R., *Mithras platonicus. Recherches sur l'hellénisation philosophique de Mithra*, Leiden 1975.
Van den Broek, R., *The Creation of Adam's Psychic Body in the Apocryphon of John*, in Van Den Broek, R. - Vermaseren, M.J. (Eds.), *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions* presented to Gilles Quispel on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday, Leiden 1981, 38-57.
Verbeke, G., *L'évolution de la doctrine du pneuma du Stoïcisme à S. Augustin*, Paris-Louvain 1945.
Vermaseren, M.J., *Corpus Monumentorum et Inscriptionum Religionis Mithriacae*, I-II, The Hague 1956-1960.
Vermaseren, M.J., *Mithriaca IV; Le Monument d'Ottaviano Zeno et le culte de Mithra sur le Célius*, Leiden 1978.
Vermaseren, M.J., and Van Essen, C.C., *The Excavations in the Mithraeum of the Church of Santa Prisca on the Aventine*, Leiden 1965.
Vernière, Y., *Symboles et Mythes dans la pensée de Plutarque*, Paris 1977.
Violet, B. (Ed.), *Die Esra-Apokalypse (IV. Esra), I. Teil: Die Überlieferung*, Leipzig 1910.
Violet, B. (Ed.), *Die Apokalypsen des Esra und des Baruch in deutschen Gestalt* (with H. Gressmann), Leipzig 1924.
Wahl, O. (Ed.), *Apocalypsis Esdrae. Apocalypsis Sedrach. Visio Beati Esdrae*, Leiden 1977.
Waszink, J.H. (Ed.), *Timaeus a Calcidio translatus commentarioque instructus*, Leiden 1962.
Waszink, J.H., *Porphyrios und Numenios*, in *Entretiens sur l'Antiquité classique*, tome XII: *Porphyre*. Fondation Hardt, Genève 1966, 33-78.
Wehrli, F., *Die Schule des Aristoteles, vol. VII: Herakleides Pontikos*, Basel 1953.
West, E.W., see Haug.
Widengren, G., *Muhammad, The Apostle of God, and His Ascension*, Uppsala 1955.
Widengren, G., see Brandt, W.
Wunderli, P., *Etudes sur le livre de l'Eschiele Mahomet*, Winterthur 1965.
Zaehner, R.C., *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism*, Oxford 1961.

INTRODUCTION

In science, as in religion, tradition plays a very important role. Outstanding figures of the past continue to exert great authority and influence, even when the content of their message has become manifestly obsolete.

Let us take, for instance, the concept of the "Copernican revolution". Even very learned people still use this formula, in spite of the fact that no scientific revolution could be ascribed to Copernicus. The idea that the earth is not the centre of the infinite universe belongs to Nicholas of Cusa. Copernicus did not share this view; for him, the universe was limited, and the difference between him and the scholastics consisted only in the nearly central position he assigned to the sun in his system. Giordano Bruno was the first to achieve the synthesis between heliocentrism and the idea of the infinitude of the universe. In spite of this, we continue to call the "Copernican revolution" a significant change in the scientific views, caused by the works of Nicholas of Cusa. This is an example of the capacity of tradition to carry on wrong conceptions.

In the scientific discipline called History of Religions, tradition is as influential as everywhere. In spite of several attempts to overcome its regressive forces, no Copernican - I beg you pardon: no *Cusan* - revolution has been achieved in this discipline. Between the late forties and the early sixties, scholars as G. Quispel, C. Colpe and H.M. Schenke have attempted to rule out some of the most absurd *traditional* ideas of the so-called "religionsgeschichtliche Schule". However, their work has not yet been carried through to its logical conclusion. There still are, in the History of Religions, many spheres where the ideas of the "religionsgeschichtliche Schule" continue to exert a powerful influence.

The purpose of this book is to uproot wrong "traditional" views in the field of the so-called "Himmelsreise der Seele" or "heavenly ascension of the soul", a field where the "religionsgeschichtliche Schule" still holds on to its monopoly.

The reader can find in this volume, besides a critical survey of the scholarly literature, which is covered in the first page of our study, a description of some relevant phenomena related to the "ascension of the soul", from the forerunners of Plato to the Christian medieval apocalypses.

The forerunners of Plato were Greek medicine-men such as Abaris, Epimenides, Empedocles and Pythagoras. They were physicians (*iatros*) as well as seers (*mantis*), or, to use E.R. Dodd's formula, *iatromantes*. The account of their journeys through the realm of visions gave birth to the Greek apocalyptic genre. In the myth of Er in the Xth Book of the *Republic*, Plato refers to the unwilling experience of a cataleptic. The study and practice of catalepsy and mediumistic trance was a speciality of the *iatromantes*.

In Plato's ontology there is a correspondence between essence, value and direction in space. What is higher is better, what is lower is coarser: this is one of the fundamental principles of Plato's system. Accordingly, the reward of the virtuous soul after death would consist in the contemplation of the summit of heavens, and the punishment of the immoral soul would consist in being kept prisoner in the bowels of the earth.

Later on, Plato's tripartite scheme (Hell - earth - Heaven) underwent a change. First, the underground Hell was transferred to some celestial place. There, the traditional punishment continued to be inflicted upon the souls of the unrighteous. The whole infernal landscape of the myths of Plato, with its rivers, lakes and mournful plains could now be found somewhere under the sphere of the moon. Even the fiery Styx flows, in Plutarch's myths, upward from the earthly Hades to the moon.

In other religious doctrines of Late Antiquity, the whole universe becomes an abode for evil. The seven planetary spheres, whose influence upon the human affairs has become overwhelming thanks to astrology, are viewed as seats of vicious astral Rulers or archons, who, on the one hand, confer their own vices to all the souls entering the world, and, on the other hand, forbid the heavenly passage to the souls that attempt to leave the world. Fortunately, a saviour descends from heaven to earth, and reveals to his disciples the watchwords they must utter before the archons, in order to get free passage through the heavenly customs.

The voyage of the saviour, of a seer or of the soul itself through seven heavens or palaces became a common place of Late Antiquity. Jewish mysticism was especially concerned with the description of the seven heavens or seven palaces (*hekhaloth*) which the seer had to cross before being led to the Throne of God.

The Jewish and Jewish-Christian tradition of the heavenly journey forms the main source of the Arabic legends of the mi'raj or heavenly ascension of the Prophet Mohammed.

The Christian medieval apocalypses depend directly on the Jewish and Jewish-Christian apocalyptic tradition. However, the direct influence, on the former, of the mi'raj legends, is possible in some cases.

This is, more or less, what the reader will find in this volume. To those who are acquainted with the "traditional" views in this field, our ideas will seem shocking, if not revolutionary. For the others - by whom I mean any reader apart from the specialist - our book could be of some use, especially to prevent them from being caught by the long tentacles of "tradition".

The system of transliteration of Arab and Hebrew words used in this book is very primary. Except for some Hebrew words whose correct transliteration seemed particularly important, in all the other cases no distinction has been made between full, long and short vowels.

(') and (') have been suppressed in Hebrew words, and rendered by a simple (') in Arab words.

PART ONE

A DELIMITATION OF THE PHENOMENON AND A CRITICAL SURVEY OF THE MODERN HISTORIOGRAPHY

CHAPTER ONE

DELIMITATION AND MORPHOLOGY OF THE PHENOMENON

Bousset's formula "Himmelsreise der Seele" is highly improper. Under this heading, three distinct categories of *récits* can be ranged, only one of them dealing directly with the "Ascension of the Soul":

A. Otherworldly revelatory journeys;

B. *Descensus* and *ascensus* of a supermundane entity, with revelatory effects upon his disciples and/or with liberating effects upon the receivers of the revelation;

C. *Ascensus* and/or *descensus* of the soul.

The first category belongs, as a whole, to the apocalyptic genre, while only some of the texts of the second, and none of the third, might casually be apocalyptic.

A. *Otherworldly revelatory journeys.*

Insofar as a person is given admittance to the otherwordly realities, hidden to the common beings, we can speak of two sorts of revelation: a) revelation *to* the person in question; b) revelation *of* the person in question to someone (friends, disciples, nation, world, etc.). In its effects, the latter form of revelation might be equivalent to an "ascension of the soul", insofar as the *datum* of the revelation concerns the destiny of the soul after death.

J.J. Collins provided a very useful definition and classification of the apocalyptic genre. According to this author, "*Apocalypse* is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world"[1]. Collins proposes the further classification of apocalypses:

Type I : Without an Otherworldly Journey;

Type II : With an Otherworldly Journey;

IIa: "Historical" Apocalypses with an Otherwordly Journey;

IIb: Otherwordly Journeys with Cosmic and/or Political Eschatology;

IIc: Otherwordly Journeys with Cosmic and/or Political Eschatology[2];

The headings b) and c) of the second type fall, in their totality, within the phenomenon of "Himmelreise der Seele". It should be noticed again that this formula is improper, since the otherworldly journey takes place, in the apocalyptic genre, sometimes *in corpore*, sometimes *in spiritu*, sometimes in an unmentioned way. There is only seldom question of an "ascension of the soul", though the eschatological revelations might disclose, to the souls of the dead, the possibility to go through the same experience, or part of it, as the hero of an apocalypse.

Since, after all, our research goes far beyond the apocalyptic genre, we do not

feel the necessity to follow either Collins's criteria of classification, or the details thereof. While the *opus laudatum* edited by Collins represent a very meritorious attempt to offer an exhaustive list of apocalypses, classified according to the content of the revelation, here our interest is exclusively concentrated on the *form* of the revelation, i.e. the actor of the apocalyptic scenery, the means by which he obtains his vision and the configuration of the other world as described by the actor. To this purpose, the dichotomy between Cosmic and/or Political Eschatology *versus* Personal Eschatology is not relevant[3].

An infallible criterion of classification of the apocalyptic writings might be derived from unvaried and uncontroversial formal features, which are not to be found in the matter of the revelation itself, but in the sort of *character* who undergoes or performs the revelation. According to such a criterion, there are three main types of apocalypses:

1. Apocalypses whose hero is elected from above, by reason of his special merits toward the other world (Elective or "Call"-Apocalypses);
2. Apocalypses whose hero is the victim of an accident or a serious illness. As in the case of the first category, there is a "call", involuntary and possibly unwished for as far as the subject is concerned, but there is no personal merit on the subject's part. This kind of *récit* might be labelled as "Apocalypses by accident".
3. Apocalypses whose hero strives to obtain a revelation. These "Quest"-Apocalypses, in contrast with the first two types, are *voluntary*.

The "Quest"-Apocalypses are further subject to a manifold classification, according to the means that are used to obtain the revelation:

3.1. Incubation;
3.2. Absorption and/or ingestion of hallucinogens;
3.3. .... Different corporeal and psychological techniques, including fasting or food control, breath control, bodily control, etc.

1. *The "Call"-Apocalypses* seem to be rather unknown in the Greek and Roman world.

The elected ones are biblical figures such as Abraham, Enoch, Isaac, Jacob, Levi, Moses, or Shem, prophets as Baruch, Esdras, Isaiah and Mohammed, rabbis like Joshuah b. Levi or the four who entered the *pardes*, or prominent New Testament characters such as the Virgin Mary or the apostles Peter and Paul, etc.

In chronological order, the most important apocalypses belonging to this category are the Ethiopian Book of Henoch (*1 Henoch*), whose oldest parts probably precede the Book of Daniel, some of the *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs*[4], *The Assumption of Moses, The Apocalypse of Abraham, The Testament of Abraham, The Book of Secrets of Enoch* (*2 Henoch* or Slavic Henoch), *The Ascension of Isaiah*[5], *The Apocalypse of Peter*[6], *The Greek Book of Baruch* (*IV Baruch*), *The Hebrew Book of Enoch* (*3 Henoch*)[7], *The Apocalypse of Paul*[8], the stories of the *isra'* and *mi'raj* of Mohammed[9], the *Visio Beati Esdrae*[10] the Greek *Apocalypse of Esdras*, the *Visio Pauli*, the *Ascension of Moses*, etc.

2. *Apocalypses by accident*. Perhaps the oldest example of such an apocalypse

is the otherwordly journey of the mighty Er the Pamphylian, son of Armenios, in Plato's *Republic*[11]. The scheme is resumed by Plutarch in the account of the experience of Aridaios-Thespesios of Soloi in *De sera numinis vindicta*[12]. During the Christian Middle-Ages, examples of accidental revelations occur in the vision of Wettin (A.D. 824)[13], *Visio Alberici Cassinensis* written in 1227[14], *Visio Tundali* written in 1148[15], etc. Such a narrative framework seems not to be familiar to the Jewish world, if we except perhaps the story of Abimelech the Ethiopian in the *Paralipomena Jeremiae* (*3 Baruch*), which, however, might be influenced by Greek stories of the kind, and, besides, has nothing to do with an otherworldly journey[16].

3. *The "Quest"-Apocalypses* present a more complex phenomenology than the two categories described above.

3.1. Incubation and perhaps drugs ingestion are already attested in the fragmentary informations concerning the seers of Archaic Greece[17]. The ritual incubation in Trophonius's cave in Lebadea forms the narrative framework of the myth of Timarchos of Cheronea in Plutarch's *De genio Socratis*[18]. This experience is comparable with the ritual catabasis of the knight Owein in St. Patrick's well at Lough Derg in Ireland, described in the *Tractatus de Purgatorio Sancti Patricii* written by the monk H. of Saltrey in 1188-89[19].

3.2. Drugs ingestion is possibly attested only in the case of the pious Arday Viraz, hero of an Iranian apocalypse of the VIth century AD. In the liquid which filled the three cups drunk by Arday Viraz, R.C. Zaehner[20] has recognized hashish. I. Sheftelowitz assumed that the "fiery drink" consumed by Esra might have been such a sort of substance[21]. Anyway, such a legendary seer of Archaic Greece as Aristeas of Proconnesus, was supposed to be able to change himself into a raven or, at least, to leave his body and take the shape of one[22]. Michael Psellus, the Christian Platonist of the XIth century, claimed to have received instruction in demonology from a "prophet of Elasonia" who, in turn, had been initiated by a certain Aletus Livius, who gave him a potion and an ointment, by which he was transformed into a raven and was able to fly everywhere, in time and in space[23]. Recently, M. Harner has made an attempt to identify the hallucionogens able to produce a similar effect[24].

3.3. Incubation in a holy place (cave, well, etc.) is usually preceded by other techniques meant to favour extasy. Food control and/or fasting are widely attested[25], as are sexual abstinence, moral purity and prayers.

According to G. Scholem[26], the mysticism of the *merkabah*, to which are related many Jewish apocalypses known under the name of "hekhalotic literature", was practised by a community of *yorede merkabah*, owners of a secret doctrine. The admittance to this esoteric group was conditioned by eight moral qualities and some peculiar physionomic and chiromantic features. Before performing a visionary experience, they had to practise asceticism for 12 or 14 days, and keep a bodily posture suitable for pre-hypnotic self-suggestion[27].

B. *Kathodos/anodos of a supermundane entity*

Another form of revelation, which does not formally belong to the apocalyptic genre, is the description of the *katabasis* and subsequently of the *anabasis* of a supermundane entity, usually a saviour, who might be, but is not necessarily, in a position of *salvator salvandus* or even *salvatus* ("erlöste Erlöser"). There are analogies, as well as differences, between the scenery of a descensus/ascensus and of the apocalyptic narratives. The main analogy consists in the fact that both the supermundane entity and the visionary disclose to their disciples and/or to the whole world hidden realities of the other world, concerning the destiny of man (personal and/or collective), as well as the configuration and destiny of the universe. But, whereas a mortal man had somehow to transcend the limitations of the human condition in order to ascend to heaven and there to obtain the revelation from divine entities, the supermundane being was himself one of the latter and, as such, was entitled to know all that had been kept secret from men. His first move, either in consequence of a mission from a higher entity, or of a spontaneous feeling of pity, was the *descent* to the earth followed sometimes by suffering and even death, and eventually by an *ascensus gloriosus* to heaven. *In the apocalyptic scenery, man is elevated; in the scenery of the catabasis God might be literally abased.* This relates mainly to the Christian, and partly to the Gnostic, ideologies, and is hardly to be found either in the Greek-Roman or in the Jewish world before the coming of the Christian religion.

A Christian scene of *descensus absconditus* followed by an *ascensus gloriosus* is reported by the IVth century writer Firmicus Maternus[28]. The Christ descends incognito to the earth, abode of the evil, "ut humanum genus a Mortis laqueis liberaret, vere omnia ista sustinuit, ut captiuitatis durae iugum tolleret... clusit ianuas sedis infernae et durae legis necessitatem calcata Morte prostrauit... fregit claustra perpetua, et ferreae fores Christo iubente conlapsae sunt, ecce terra contremuit et fundamentum suorum stabilitate concusso praesentis Christi numen agnouit". After this, he returns in glory to heaven, and this time "cognoscitur statim a custodibus caeli Filius Dei."

The situation of the Jewish-Christian Ist cent. apocalypse known as the *Ascension of Isaiah*, which represents, in reality, only the second part of a longer writing beginning with a *Martyrdom of Isaiah*, is more complicated. It is difficult to distinguish in it the Jewish-Christian from the Gnostic elements, since all the versions which reached us possibly underwent slight Gnostic interventions. The IVth century bishop of Salamis, Epiphanios, reports in his *Panarion*[29] that the Archontic Gnostics made use of the apocryphal *Ascensio Isaiae*. This case is not isolated, since some versions of the apocryphal *Vita Adae* are undoubtedly Gnostic, while others are Jewish-Christian, sometimes with Gnostic interpolations[30]. Anyway, in the *Ascension of Isaiah* there is at least one motif which is typically Gnostic, i.e., the ignorance and pride of the "archon, and the angels and the gods who rule over the world"[31]. According to the Latin version of the apocryphal, God tells the Saviour: "Exi et descende de omnibus celis, et sis in mundo et vade usque ad angelum, qui est in infernum, transfigurans te secundum formam illorum, et non cognoscent te, neque angeli neque principes seculi illius: et iudicabis principem illius seculi et angelos

eius et mundi rectores, ideo quia negauerunt me et dixerunt, nos sumus et sine nobis nemo est... et tunc exiuit dominus de septimo celo et descendit in sextum celum... Cum viderunt eum angeli, laudauerunt et glorificauerunt eum, non enim transfigurauit se in figura eorum..." In the subsequent heavens, the Christ has to take the respective shapes of the local angels, who do not seem to appreciate any intrusion into their realms. "Cum descendisset in quintum celum ibi statim transfigurauit se secundum formam angelorum illorum (same thing to the first heaven). Ideo non cantabant ei, nec adorabant, apparebat enim illis similis eorum, ostendebat enim caracterem per singulos celos custodibus portarum"[32]. After his passion and resurrection, Christ is worshipped by the angels' choirs during his *ascensus gloriosus*.

The idea that the aeon Christ, in his descent from the *pleroma* to the earth, takes the shape of the evil cosmic archons in order to deceive them and empty them of their power occurs in the doctrine of the Ophites reported by the IInd century heresiologist Irenaeus of Lyon. Sophia announces the coming of the aeon Christ through the voice of John the Baptist and prepares the man Jesus so that the pneumatic Christ may find a *vas mundum* to abide in, "uti per filium eius Jaldabaoth foemina a Christo annuntiaretur" (Jaldabaoth is the abortive son of Sophia and the chief of the evil archons). "Descendisse autem eum (sc. Christum) per septem coelos assimilatum filiis eorum dicunt et sensim eorum evacuasse virtutem"[33]. In this manner, Christ clears out the evil forces of the astral fatality from the planetary skies, he cancels - in the concrete, physical, sense of the word - the *fatum*. Through the breach he has created, the soul of the adept is free to find his way to the pleroma.

The same basic idea of the saviour who clears away the demonic powers of the heavenly princes occurs in other Gnostic texts, for instance in the well-known *Psalm of the Naassenes* reported by Hippolytus of Rome (*ob*. 235) in his *Philosophoumena*[34]. The intention of the downward movement of the Gnostic *soter* is here caused by the pity he proves toward the tribulations of the human soul. Here too, the *kathodos* of the saviour clears the way for the *anodos* of the soul.

In the treatise *Trimorphic Protennoia* found at Nag Hammadi, dating from the beginning of the IIIrd century AD, there is a detailed account of the descensus incognitus[35], preceded by a mention of both the descensus and the ascensus gloriosus, which I report in the translation of J.D. Turner: "And I hid myself in everyone and revealed (myself) within them, and every mind seeking me longed for me, for it is I who gave shape to the All when it had no form. And I transformed their forms into (other) forms until the time when a form will be given to the All. It is through me that the Voice originated and it is I who put the breath within my own. And I cast into them the eternally holy Spirit and I ascended and entered my Light. (I went up) upon my branch and sat (there among) the Sons of the (holy) Light. And (I withdrew) to their dwelling place which (...) became (glorious... Amen)"[36].

In other treatises of the IIIrd century, such as the Coptic *Pistis Sophia* of the Askew codex, the detailed account of the ascensus gloriosus might be directly told by the saviour to his disciplines. Obviously, in this case the saviour has to descend again to the Mount of the Olives, surrounded by the unbearable light of his glory (*doxa*), in order to report what happened during his journey through the aeons, the "mysteries" of the pleroma[37].

A scene of descensus incognitus followed by estrangement, passion and, eventually, by the ascensus gloriosus, occurs in the so-called *Hymn of the Pearl* of the encratite *Acts of Thomas* written in Edessa around 225 AD[38].

C. *Ascensus and/or descensus of the soul*

The last category of testimonies that should be examined closely, concern the "Himmelsreise der Seele" in its proper meaning: that of descent of the individual soul from, and ascension to, the sky. *The study of this particular evidence, its origins and history, its complex relationship to the other two classes shortly discussed above, and, above all, of the scholarly theories about and around it, form the central purpose of our present work.*

The variety of materials and historical problems concerning the otherworldly revelatory journeys in the apocalyptic writings and the kathodos-anodos of a supermundane entity are treated here only as auxiliary documents and, as such, a detailed exposé and discussion thereof does not seem necessary. On the contrary, more attention must be paid to the texts concerning the ascensus and/or descensus of the soul, and, in the following chapters, to the critical comment of the historiography related to this subject.

The idea of a cognation between the soul and the stars was already present in pre-Socratic Greece, as were the catasterisms of gods and heroes and possibly the belief in the celestial immortality of the soul[39]. According to a Pythagorean *acousma* reported by a late Neoplatonic, "the sun and the moon are the Isles of the Blessed"[40]. To Heraclitus is ascribed the idea that the soul "is a spark of sidereal essence"[41]. "That the human soul has a very close relationship to the sky and the stars, and even that it comes from heaven and returns to it, is... a generally held belief in Ionian *physiologia*, at least from the time of Heraclitus and Anaxagoras. In the garb of *physiologia*, and in 'materialistic' phraseology, what starts as a *doxa* continues to exert its influence sometimes with more emphasis on salvation of the soul, and sometimes with more on general thought of microcosm and macrocosm: man is made of portions of the cosmos, and in death like returns to like"[42].

Empedocles, and especially Plato, give a dualistic turn to this ancient belief. For Plato, the soul falls from its happy heavenly existence in the prison of the fleshly body. It will be able to return again to the contemplation of eternal Beauty, if and only if it will stay away from the bodily pressures during a certain number of incarnations[43].

The Hermetic lay astrology, whose first treatises appeared in the IIIrd century BC, undoubtedly contributed to foster the idea of a close relationship between stars and human fate. But the terms in which this relationship was expressed were far more concrete than we imagine. Not only all the basic concepts of astrology (signs, decans, degrees, planets, aspects, houses, "parts", etc.) were represented as personal entities, but the study of astral destiny itself had a revelatory character. It was a divine voice that told Nechepso the secrets of the cosmic order[44], and, many centuries later, the astrologer Ptolemaeus still was seized by a sort of mystical elevation when contemplating the "astral choirs"[45]. In one of the oldest parts of the

Ethiopian Book of Henoch, astronomy and the calendar are secrets whose attainment requires an otherworldly journey[46]!

The astrologic idea that each of the seven planets rules, according to its position, aspects, etc., over a certain field of human activities, and the results thereof, has had a very important issue, i.e. the influential theory of the descent of the soul through the spheres of the planets. It was this doctrine, combined with the Stoic-medical and Aristotelic pleumatology, that led further to the Neoplatonic theory of the *ochema* or "vehicle" of the soul. Under one form or another, the mythology of the embodiment of the soul, derived from the above mentioned sources, represented one of the major cultural constants of Late Antiquity, from Basilides to Hierocles.

The scenery of putting on and off the planetary vestures was not the only form of descensus/ascensus. Its strongest concurrent was probably the wide-spread pattern of a journey through many (sometimes in an incredible number) customs, where terrible door-keepers, with animal shapes and very strange names indeed, were in charge of controlling the passport (i.e., the "seal" or badge) the knowledge of the watchwords, and, sometimes, the moral luggage of the soul. A sort of military régime was, in that case, installed in the sky, and the soul was supposed to have been instructed in the profound lore of the *mots de passe*, names of the watchers and protective seals, in order to be able to cross the large heavenly zone occupied by enemy forces and reach her allies who would give her eternal sustenance and rest from all the worldly tribulations. This sort of scenery concerned only the ascension of the individual soul, but it is easy to notice how strongly it was connected with the descensus incognitus of the saviour. The knowledge of names, badges and routes of the other world had a place of honor in Gnosticism, and also in the *Chaldaean Oracles*, in the Magic Papyri, and, in a milder form, in some Christian apocalypses. The main difference between Gnosticism and the Chaldaean doctrine is related to the proper time of using this gnosis. There is scarce evidence that the Gnostic adept was ever supposed to make use of it during his earthly existence. For him, it was mainly a means to secure his destiny after death. On the contrary, H. Lewy claims that the theurgic elevation was a cathartical, not an eschatological, operation, and, as such, took place during the life of the adept[47].

Another group of testimonies concerning the improvement of the after-life destiny, derives from the ideology of the mysteries. Dionysus was traditionally implicated in the ascension of the soul to the sky. In the Ist and IInd centuries AD, the divinities of the mysteries, including Persephone and Cybele, whose background was clearly chtonian, were, in general, located in the sky. They were supposed to receive there the soul of their worshippers after death. The question whether an ascension of the soul during the life of the initiate ever took place, is relevant for the mysteries of Isis and Mithras only.

1. *The theory of the passage of the soul through the planetary spheres*

Already present in the lay Gnosticism of the IInd century AD, is given a special emphasis in the writings of Basilides and, very likely, of his son Isidorus. It is employed by the author(s) of the IIIrd century Gnostic treatise *Pistis Sophia*[49]. The ascension of the soul through the planets and the gradual deposition of the vices

contracted during the descent forms the object of chapters 25-26 of the Hermetic *Poimandres*[49]. Some scholars claim that the whole doctrine was known by Numenius of Apamea, who transmitted it to Porphyry[50]. The latter was the direct source used by Macrobius and Proclus[51]. This might be true, but there is no decisive evidence either for, or against this assumption. Porphyry was certainly acquainted with the doctrine[52], but our principal testimonies concerning it come from Macrobius, Servius, and Proclus[53], and each of them refers to sources which never coincide.

The whole theory of the *ochema* or pneumatic vehicle of the soul, perfected by the late Neoplatonists[54], is based on the doctrine of the transit of the soul through the spheres. This dependence of the former on the latter is clearly expressed in Proposition 209 of Proclus's *Elements of Theology*, reported here in E.R. Dodds's translation: "The vehicle of every particular soul descends by the addition of vestures (*chitones*) increasingly material; and ascends in company with the soul through divestment of all that is material and recovery of its proper form, after the analogy of the soul which makes use of it: for the soul descends by the acquisition of irrational principles of life; and ascends by putting off all those faculties tending to temporal process with which it was invested in its descent, and becoming clean and bare of all such faculties as serve the uses of the process"[55].

We tried elsewhere to demonstrate that the doctrine of the assumption of qualities or vices from the planets was astrological in origin. Its probable source, at which one of our testimonies seems to hint[56], was the pseudo-Hermetic treatise *Panaretos*, where the doctrine of the "parts" (*kleroi, sortes*) was discussed[57].

2. *The heavenly customs*

"The celestial journey of the returning soul is one of the most constant common features in otherwise widely divergent gnostic systems, and its significance for the gnostic mind is enhanced by the fact that it represents a belief not only important in gnostic theory and expectation, and expressive of the conception of man's relation to the world, but of immediate practical relevance to the gnostic believer, since the meaning of *gnosis* is to prepare for this final event, and all of its ethical, ritual, and technical instruction is meant to secure its succesful completion"[58]. The practical or technical content of the gnosis regards "the 'knowledge of the way', i.e. of the sacraments to be performed now, of the 'names' to be employed later when the ascending spirit meets the powers after leaving the body at death, and whatever ritual or ethical preparation may assure this future passage"[59]. As we have already mentioned, the catabasis/anabasis of the gnostic saviour became the referential paradigm of the actual experience of the adept. The aim of the gnostic sacraments is to prepare the ascension of the soul. For Marcos, for instance, the purpose of the extreme unction is to make the soul invisible for "the archons and the powers", so that "their inner man ascends through the invisible essences, while their body is left behind in the world of creatures and their soul falls to the Demiurge. If, then, they arrive at the Powers after their death, they have to say the following: 'I am a Son of the Father, the pre-existing Father, his Son in the Present. I have come to see all that is mine and what is not, etc. (...) With these words he evades the Powers. He then arrives at the companions of the Demiurge and he who has departed from this

life says to the associates of the Demiurge: 'I am a vessel more precious than the Woman who made Thee, etc. (...)' As soon as the associates of the Demiurge hear these words, they are overcome by a great fear, and recognise their own origin and the parentage of their Mother. He (the Gnostic) enters, however, into his own, and casts off his shackle, that is the soul"[60].

The writings of the codices Askew and Bruce (*Pistis Sophia*, the two *Books of Yeû* and a fragment of an unknown gnostic work[61]) contain the secret names and formulae intended to secure the transit of the soul through the doors watched by terrific guardians. With De Faye's words, "Il s'agit de faire connaître aux adeptes de la secte les formules et les mots mystérieux qui assurent à l'âme, après qu'elle a quitté le corps, un libre passage à travers les compartiments ou les étages qui se succèdent dans le monde invisible. Le gnostique trouvait dans ces pages le viatique dont il aurait besoin un jour pour son voyage dans l'au-delà. C'était le manuel des mots de passe nécessaire à l'âme pour monter jusqu'à l'absolue lumière, jusqu'au Père"[62].

The doctrine of the *Chaldaean Oracles* has the same practical purpose. "The 'elevation' itself constitutes the principal act of the Chaldaean mystery"[63]. "The realization of the soul's wish to return to the place from which she was sent down by the Paternal Intellect is only possible, when she has remembered the magical 'watchword' forgotten by her at the moment of entering the body. This *synthema* which being uttered disposed the Supreme Intellect in favour of the soul's wish is identical with the one of the 'symbols' (i.e. *voces mysticae*) which this Intellect, according to another Oracle, 'has shown throughout the world and which are assimilated to the 'ineffable beauty'. The metaphysical terms used in this Oracle fail to mask a fundamental doctrine of Chaldaean theurgy: the magical formulae (*symbola, synthemata*) by means of which the theurgist brings about the 'unification' with the deity are identical with the thoughts of the Supreme Father disseminated by him throughout the world with the intenion of preserving its harmonious existence. Because of her noetic origin, the human soul has knowledge of these world-ruling 'names' (*arrheta onomata*), but forgets them after her descent to the realm of matter and remembers them again only after her deliverance from her earthly bondage. Through the utterance of these magical 'watchwords' the theurgist gains mastery over the invoked cosmic powers, and aids his soul to be united to the 'ineffable beauty' of the supercelestial world"[64].

The means of passing through the heavenly customs are also described in the Magic Papyri, and the watchwords seem to be one of the specialities of the latter, although not in the same excessive proportion as in the Jewish mysticism of the merkabah. The so-called "Mithraic liturgy" is likely to be a description of the experience of the soul after death. A prayer is used by the soul to attain the doors of the heavenly fire, after which there is the aethereal world of the planetary gods. In front of these doors, it must introduce itself to the keeper and utter a magic formula: "I am also a star going together with you, rising, with its rays of light, from the depths: oxyoxerthouth". The journey goes on, with the aid of Helios, through other gates, beyond the Pole and the sphere of the fixed stars, to the Divinity[65].

Some of the incomprehensible formulae of the magic papyri, when composed exclusively of vowels[66], are very probably melodic incantations according to the Greek musical notation[67].

Secret names, watchwords and seals play a determinant role in the Jewish mysticism of the markabah, expressed, *inter alia*, in the so-called "hekhalotic literature"[68]. The visionary experience took place during the life of the adept and consisted of a passage through the seven heavenly palaces (*hekhaloth*), to God's Throne[69]. The transit was granted only to the owner of the seven seals, containing the magic names standing as "fiery pillars around the fiery Throne"[70]. Anyway, the magic formula uttered before Domiel and Kaphtsiel, the watchers of the seventh hekhal, is but a Greek sentence in a slightly erroneous Hebrew transcription[71].

3. *The ascension of the soul in the Mysteries*

The soul of the initiate in the mysteries of Late Antiquity is supposed to join, after the death of the mortal body, the heavenly realms of Cybele[72], Dionysos[73], or Persephone[74]. Although, according to A. Delatte, the idea of a lunar Persephone already occurred in a pindaric fragment[75], it is nevertheless strange that some of the divinities who, like Persephone, were traditionally called *χθονία βασίλεια*, abide now on the moon or somewhere in the sky. However, it is not our intention to analyze here the testimonies concerning the eschatology of the mysteries. We shall consider those texts only, that might hint at a psychanody during the life of the initiate in the mysteries of Isis and Mithra.

1. The well-known Isiac synthema in Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*[76] poses a number of (perhaps insoluble) hermeneutic problems. The passage concerning the elements (*per omnia vectus elementa remeavi*) seems to indicate a return journey, but the spatial interpretation is not the only pertinent one. In 1900, K.H.E. De Jong, author of *De Apuleio Isiacorum Mysteriorum Teste*, came to the conclusion that the possible interpretations were three in number, and the recent research is not more advanced:

1) a staging[77] (R. Merkelbach supported further this hypothesis[78]);

2) an allusion to the invulnerability of the *mystes*[79];

3) an extatic journey (hypothesis supported by De Jong himself[80]).

In his edition of the XIth Book of the *Metamorphoses*, G. Gwyn Griffiths has discussed all these possibilities[81]. The author, recently followed by J. Bergman[82], believes that the origin of the "passage through the elements" might be Egyptian. Anyway, no indication allows us to state that Apuleius's allusions concern the performance of a psychoanody.

2. The Mithraic ideology of elevation is still more controversial. The IInd century Pagan author Celsus described, in his *Alethes logos*, the well-known "Mithraic symbol", a "ladder with seven doors" ascribed to the seven planets and disposed in the contrariwise order of the days of the planetary week[83]. According to Celsus, this object symbolized "the journey of the soul through the spheres"[84]. It has been noticed that the order of the planets was not suitable for such an experience. R. Turcan has suggested then that the Mithraic ladder might symbolize a chronological process, a "cosmic week" that would coincide with a number of reincarnations[85]. The texts adduced by R. Turcan do not seem to support such an interpretation[86]. Furthermore, the question whether the object described by Celsus ever existed has not been solved. Even in the affirmative, it is impossible to prove

either that it really belonged to Mithra's mysteries, or that Celsus gave a correct interpretation of it. Planetary series occur often enough on Mithraic monuments[87], but none of them coincides with that of the symbolon (maybe with one exception[88]). Nevertheless, complicated astrological computations seem to be connected both with some of these series[89], and with the building of the *mithraea* themselves[90]. A community which was capable of such scientific sophistication, was certainly capable of producing or of using symbolism of that sort[91].

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a short presentation and classification of the categories of testimonies which form the object of the historiographical controversies further discussed in our book. There has been absolutely no pretension of exhaustivity on our part[92]. On merely didactic and heuristic grounds, we have presented a general typology of the main groups of testimonies concerning psychanody and other similar sceneries, from Archaic Greece to the medieval apocalypses, with particular regard to Late Antiquity. Historical criteria were relevant to this classification, insofar as the ideologies, fantasmagories, and performances of Late Antiquity have an *origin*, which sometimes might be tracked down to archaic patterns, and an *issue*, which often enough is attained by the Islamic world and the Western medieval world.

The most important classes of testimonies regarding our research are those related to the ascensus and/or descensus of the soul. Within this category, three main groups have been further distinguished:

1) Testimonies concerning the transit of the soul through the planetary spheres;
2) In close connection with 1), testimonies concerning the heavenly customs;
3) Testimonies related to the mysteries.

Two other classes of testimonies, which are of interest to our research insofar as they have a very strong connection with the psychanody, are the otherworldly revelatory journeys, which form a part of the apocalyptic genre, and the kathodos/anodos of a supermundane entity. To all these three main classes, the improper name of "Himmelsreise der Seele" has been given by W. Bousset, one of the most famous representatives of the "religionsgeschichtliche Schule". The criticism of this German school and its supporters, forms the object of the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

A HISTORICAL FALLACY: THE THEORIES OF THE "RELIGIONSGESCHICHTLICHE SCHULE"

Our survey might conventionally begin with the year 1872, when Martin Haug and E.W. West edited and translated the pahlavi text of the *Book of Arda Viraf*, as established by the Destur Jamasp Asa[1]. J.A. Pope had, since 1816, translated one of the many extant later Persian versions of the *Arday Viraz Nameh*, but the existence of a pahlavi version pleaded for an earlier date of composition of this writing.

The problem was - and M. Haug had tried to solve it in a series of articles - whether or not the account of the otherworldly journey of Arda Viraf depended on a Jewish model. Haug had come to the conclusion that the description of Arda Viraf's experience did not match with earlier Jewish apocalypses, such as *The Ascension of Isaiah* or the *History of Rabbi Joshua ben Levi*. The main difference between the pahlavi and the Jewish (or Jewish-Christian) accounts of the journey consisted in the number of *heavens* that the visionary had to visit: 7 in Jewish apocalypses, only 4 in the pahlavi. That is why M. Haug felt entitled to state: "The originality of the visions of Arda Viraf may be regarded as being beyond any doubt. They are so thoroughly Zoroastrian that only a professor of that religion can have seen them"[2].

Twenty years later, in 1892, the theologian Wilhelm Brandt, author of a book on *Das mandäische Religion* (1889), published a 70-page article in two parts, dealing with *Das Schicksal der Seele nach dem Tode nach mandäischen und parsischen Vorstellungen*[3]. Brandt compared the scenery of the Mandaean *massiqta* ("ascension") with the accounts of the posthumous destiny of the soul contained in the pahlavi writings translated by E.W. West in the *Sacred Books of The East*, and came to the conclusion that the *massiqta* depended on a Persian model. The problem and its solution were, for Brandt, less of a speculative, than of a practical kind. His demonstrations are often convincing, but also often far-fetched. In his wish to track all the Jewish motifs occuring in the Mandaean ascension (the Paradise, the Tree of Life, the garment of the Just, etc.) down to an Iranian origin, W. Brandt is the most typical forerunner of G. Widengren.

Brandt's statements, even when obviously wrong, look very innocuous. This author does not claim yet that the matter of the pahlavi writings of the IXth century is pre-Christian, or even pre-platonic. But in his attempts to overrule all contrary evidence in order to reduce everything to an Iranian - be it "remote" - origin, Brandt already belongs to the influential German "religionsgeschichtliche Schule".

It is difficult to avoid the impression that scholars like Brandt and, further, Reitzenstein, although probably unaware of it, were engaged in a battle whose prize went far beyond the inconsequential polemics between academics. Such an impression is enhanced by the reading of articles coming from Jewish scholars, such as, for instance, Moses Gaster, who published in 1893 the English translation of a medieval text called *The Revelation of Moses*, claiming that this writing was pre-Christian and served as a source for all later Christian, Islamic, and other apocalypses, including the *Arda*

Viraf Namak[4]. This conclusion, no less far-fetched than Brandt's, gives a clue to the appreciation of the issue of the whole controversy. Without entering into further details, which go beyond the scope of this book, we can state, however, that the "religionsgeschichtliche Schule" and its theories were a fashionable expression of a whole. "Both men and women... think, feel, and desire what fashion commands, so that in the end a single, regular thread is established, running from the colour of the tie to the political affiliation, to the emotion, to the most intimate expression of the soul", affirms a specialist[5]. One could easily infer that, beyond the intention of its single members, the "religionsgeschichtliche Schule" were to play, in the whole *apparatus* of a fatal ideological fashion later installed, a role comparable to that of a suitable neck-tie, i.e., of a single element that, detatched from its proper context, has a very innocuous appearence.

If Brandt is an immediate forerunner, W. Anz is the first spokesman of the "religionsgeschichtliche Schule". His 112-page booklet *Zur Frage nach dem Ursprung des Gnostizismus. Ein religionsgeschichtlicher Versuch* appeared in 1897 in the *Texte und Untersuchungen* published by J.C. Hinrichs in Leipzig[6]. This writing, as the first expression of a very influential scholarly theory, deserves a close review.

The first chapter of Anz's *Zur Frage*... already bears a conclusive title: *Die Lehre vom Aufstieg der Seelen als die gnostische Zentrallehre*. Anz believes that Simon Magus was the first Gnostic[7], but, as his surname emphasized, was also a sorcerer. There was a close relation between Gnosticism and magic, whose most important expression was the common belief in the flight of the soul, which represents "the central doctrine of Gnosticism". The Gnostics, as the sorcerers, used "seals" (*sphragides*) and watchwords (*symbola*) in order to secure the passage of the soul through the watchers (*archontes, daimones, thuroroi*) of the heavenly customs, usually seven in number.

What was the origin of this doctrine?

In Jewish writings there is frequently matter of 7 skies, but these are not ruled by demons. There is a Greek doctrine of the soul's transit across the planets, but the Greek universe is harmony and wholeness. All that leads to the conclusion that the Gnostic passage of the soul through the demonized skies is neither Jewish, nor Greek in origin. In this case, one must seek the origin of the Gnostic *Zentrallehre* in a religion where: 1) the astral powers play an important role, and 2) magic activities are frequently performed. Such a religion might be only the Babylonian one. The best proof thereof is the fact that, in the religion of the Mandaeans, which is a sort of "ethnic Gnosticism" derived from the transformation undergone by the Babylonian religion within the Aramaic-speaking tribes settled in Babylonia, the *massiqta* or ascension of the soul through the demonized heavens represents one of the two crucial experiences in the life of the adept (the other one being the baptism or *masbuta*). Furthermore, the names of the archons in the religion of the Mandaeans are but the Babylonian names of the seven planets[8].

Another proof - strange as it might seem - is derived by Anz from the Mithraic *symbolon* described by Celsus. The sevenfold ladder, whose metal steps correspond to the seven planets (with an eighth, superimposed, step, for the sphere of the fixed), would be but a later *réplique* of the temple of Babel, as described by Herodotus[9]. However, it is very difficult to understand whether the seven-layer temple

of Borsippa represented, for Anz, a planetary model or not. The sevenfold ladder would derive from speculations on the architectural symbolism of the temple, it would be "eine Übertragung jenes Bauwerkes ins Metaphysische"[10]. The conclusion is quickly reached: "Damit sind wir denn auf der Suche nach dem Ursprung unserer Lehre sum dritten Mal[11] auf Babylonien hingeführt, diesmal auf die Landschaft in engeren Sinne..."[12]. Anyway, the mysteries of Mithra are Persian, and this is, for Anz, a good clue to solve the riddle. As a matter of fact, in the Babylonian religion the idea of an ascension to heaven would be lacking[13], and thus the *Heimat* thereof must be Iran[14]. What comes from Babylonia is the sevenfold partition of the heavens. "Der Schauplatz, auf dem die Zentrallehre des Gnostizismus erwachsen ist, ist demnach Babylonien selbst, aber sie ist nicht entstanden auf dem Boden der rein babylonischen Religion. Sie ist selbst schon ein Produkt der Religionsmischung, gewissermassen eine Häresie der babylonischen Religion, gegen deren astrologischen Determinismus sie sich auflehrt. Mit national-persischen Gedanken verknüpft ist diese Lehre in die Mithrasmysterien übernommen"[15].

This music soon palls, but the time to stop it would only come after one more audition: that of the further speculations on the same matter, due to Wilhelm Bousset. The difference, both in quality and in quantity, between Anz and Bousset is obviously great. Bousset was certainly one of the greatest scholars of our century in the Late Antique field, and some of his works are still valid, in spite of the early date of their writing. Certainly, only a few still believe that Christianity is a minor wing of the pre-Christian Gnosticism, or that Gnosticism has an Iranian origin[16]. These ideas, made very influential by R. Reitzenstein, have been long since buried[17]. No matter how wrong both of them were, one cannot restrain oneself from observing that Bousset's reasoning was much more coherent than Anz's.

In 1901, Bousset published a 77-page article in two parts, with the title *Die Himmelsreise der Seele*[18]. This work begins with very sensible remarks concerning the two types of journeys of the soul: 1) eschatological (after the death of the body); 2) extatic (during the life of the performer). The extatic journey is an anticipation of the eschatological[19].

The first chapter of the article deals with Jewish and Christian (including Gnostic) testimonies of the *Himmelsreise*. Bousset comes to the following important conclusions:

1) That most testimonies account for the existence of 7 heavenly layers, while only a few of them (*Test. Levi*, ch. 2; *Apoc. Mosis*, 37; *Apoc. Pauli*, etc.) refer to 3 heavens;
2) That the doctrine of the ascension of the soul is not the *Zentrallehre* of Gnosticism, as Anz had believed, but one of the important Gnostic dogmas.

Bousset's position toward Anz is critical: "Anz war jedenfalls in Recht, wenn er auf einen vorchristlichen Ursprung der Kernlehre des Gnosticismus von der Himmelsreise der Seele schloss. Und auch das Judentum wird man kaum für die Heimat dieser Vorstellung halten wollen... Anz hat geglaubt, diese Frage wesentlich mit einem Hinweis auf die babylonische Religion, allerdings unter Heranziehung der eranischen Religion, erklären zu können. Die folgende Untersuchung soll zeigen dass der eranischen Religion die eigentliche Priorität und der ausschlaggebende Einfluss in dieser Hinsicht zukommt"[20].

The second chapter of Bousset's work bears the title *Die Vorstellungen auf dem Gebiet der eranischen Religion*. The survey of the Iranian evidence leads to the conclusion that "*wir in der eranischen Religion die Heimat jener bunten Phantasien und jener ekstatischen Mystik zu suchen haben. Die Mithrasreligion ist dann die Brücke gewesen, auf der jene Ideen dem Westen zugeführt wurden*"[21].

In the third chapter, Bousset comes to the conclusion that the more ancient doctrine, whose origin was Iranian, was acquainted with 3 skies only, while the presence of 7 heavenly layers, responding to the 7 planets, is accounted for by a later Babylonian influence[22]. He believes too that Herodotus's description of the temple of Borsippa contains an implicit explanation of the Mithraic sevenfold ladder[23], and establishes a link between the Mithraic doctrine reported by Celsus and other testimonies concerning 7 cosmic periods symbolized by 7 metals[24].

In conclusion, Bousset builds up a theory that scarcely resembles Anz's: the doctrine of the ascension of the soul has an Iranian origin. In its original form, the ascension took place through three heavens. Under Babylonian influence, the number of heavens was changed from 3 to 7 (the planetary skies). Later, a new Iranian influence adds to all this a strong dualistic vision of the world, which accounts for the demonization of the archontic skies in Gnosticism[25].

After the publication of *Die Himmelsreise der Seele*, Bousset must have become aware of one of the weakest points of his arguments, i.e. the idea that the "demonization of the cosmos" represents a later Iranian contribution to Gnosticism. Therefore, he returns later on to this subject, namely in his *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis* of 1907[26].

His evidence comes from the late pahlavi and Persian writings related to the Iranian religions, especially the *Bundahishn*, the *Menok-i-Khrat*, the *Ulema-i Islam*, the Persian *Rivayat* and Shahrastani, that report a story concerning seven (planetary) demons. He believes that this doctrine, which cannot be Avestan, belongs to the IVth and Vth century Zurvanism[27]. The Mandaean doctrine of the seven evil planets derives from the same source[28]. Whereas the earlier arguments of Bousset are not sufficient, this time they are obviously contradictory. A belief which does not appear in Iran before (at the earliest!) the IVth century, cannot explain *much earlier occurrences* elsewhere.

Bousset's theories have had a decisive influence on both the representatives of the "religionsgeschichtliche Schule" and on outsiders. Of the former, R. Reitzenstein[29], J. Kroll [30] and R. Bultmann[31] deserve a special mention. Of the latter, the names of A. Dieterich[32] and F. Cumont[33], two outstanding scholars partially converted to the ideas of the "religionsgeschichtliche Schule", are sufficient to show how powerful the influence of the German school was. Insofar as all these scholars only repeat Bousset's statements concerning the Iranian origin of the ascension of the soul and of the "demonization of the cosmos", a detailed review of their positions would not shed more light on the whole subject. Therefore, what remains to be done, is a close critical investigation of Bousset's whole theory, in connection with those of his forerunners Brandt and Anz.

Anz's main assumption, which also played an important role in Bousset's arguments, was that the seven planetary skies were derived from the Babylonian religion. The Babylonian *ziqqurat*, with its 3 or 4, later 7 layers, was supposed to be a

symbolic representation of the seven skies[34], of the cosmic mountains[35], of the seven planets[36], etc. Since 1920, J.L. Palache[37] has opposed these generalizations. It is difficult, if not impossible, to know what the *ziqqurat* really represented. Furthermore, the number of its layers varied between 3 and 9[38], and the reason why 7 was eventually preferred remains unknown[39].

According to Herodotus's testimony, the layers of the *ziqqurat* had different colours[40]. In an article of 1861, Rawlinson established a connection between these colours, the colours of the metals which composed the sevenfold Mithraic ladder described by Celsus, and the colours of the planets according to lay astrology[41]. This theory was further resumed by Jeremias[42], who believed that the colours of the *ziqqurat* responded to the planets[43]. But other authors doubt whether those colours ever existed, and M. Jastrow[44] considers that the relation between colours and planets in the Babylonian religion is highly questionable[45].

The second assumption shared by Anz and Bousset was that the idea of an ascension to the sky could not be Babylonian, but only Iranian. According to Anz, there are many Babylonian testimonies concerning the descensus ad inferos, but no evidence about a heavenly ascent. After all, this is not true, because Etana was transported through the seven heavens by an eagle, and Adapa, son of Eridu, could open the heavenly gate with a watchword given by Ea, and overcome the perils of the passage with the aid of his *présence d'esprit*[46]. But, even admitting that Anz's statement were true, the *argumentum a silentio* does not suffice to prove the Iranian origin of the ascension. If we look closely at the late and very late testimonies adduced by Bousset in support of this assumption, we can easily conclude, not only that none of them is decisive, but even that many of them are completely unreliable, being only superficially related to an "Iranian" source[47] at all.

While Anz did not pay much attention to *dualism*, which probably represents a constant feature of any Gnostic system[48], Bousset was aware of the peculiar emphasis of this phenomenon in the cultural climate of Late Antiquity. Like many a scholar today, Bousset was persuaded that the origin of Gnostic dualism could not be Jewish, since the God of the Jews underwent in Gnosticism a process of "demonization", whose result was His transformation into the evil demiurge of this world. This particular form of "antisemitism" was considered incompatible with Jewish religious thinking. E. Peterson[49] and G. Quispel[50] have shown, with peremptory arguments, that things are not as simple as that[51]. Anyway, this still remains a controversial point, which we do not intend to discuss further in our present critical survey. In consequence of his conviction that Gnosticism could not have a Jewish background, Bousset had to make a choice between the Orient and the Classical world, in order to state whence came Gnostic dualism. This choice was entirely pre-determined by factors other than scientific, and it should scarcely surprise us that Bousset backed the weakest candidate in the competition: the Iranian religion.

As a matter of fact, Zoroastrianism is dualistic in so far as an evil principle challenges the divinity. But, except for late Zurvanite speculations and popular dualism, the Zoroastrian God is unique in his almightiness, he is the creator and ruler of a good world, and his ontological priority and final victory upon the evil principle are beyond any doubt. Even if some of these assumptions were question-

able, as far as single moments of Iranian religious history are concerned, neither Bousset, nor any other scholar could deny that the world as such, and the human existence in the world, are viewed in Zoroastrianism and in all its later manifestations as something intensely positive. There is hardly any resemblance between Gnostic dualism, which is explicitely *anticosmic* and *antisomatic*, and Zoroastrian dualism, which is *pro-cosmic*.

On the contrary, there are Greek testimonies, which Bousset does not ignore, according to which this world is a *lacrimarum vallis*, and the human body is actually a corpse or a prison for the supermundane soul. Plato himself shared much of this conviction, whose representatives were Empedocles, the Orphics, and possibly the Pythagoreans[52]. As the Gnostics themselves, Empedocles and the Orphics had been defenders of an *antisomatic*, as well as *anticosmic*, form of dualism. This resemblance between Orphics and Gnostics led to the hypothesis of the Greek origin of Gnostic dualism[53]. However, we are inclined to agree with H.J.W. Drijvers[54] when he rejects this theory, because the analogy between the two phenomena is merely phenomenological and does not reflect any form of historical dependence. No matter what the true origin of Gnostic dualism actually is, one thing is certain: that the theory of the Iranian background of Gnosticism has no chance of survival either on the merely phenomenological or on the historical plane.

Our last objection concerns Bousset's statements relating to the seven evil stars. The legend of the seven *div* (Ahrimanic demons) made prisoners by the forces of Ohmazd and eventually transformed into the seven luminaries, is mentioned by many late Iranian sources[55]. The Mandaean *Ginza*[56] reports a very similar story, except that the names of the planets are here Babylonian[57]. It is beyond doubt that the religion of the Mandaeans, in its different phases, underwent both Babylonian and Iranian influences. In our case, it is difficult to ascertain where the legend comes from. However, the idea of the existence of seven evil stars, probably those of the Pleiads[58], was typically Babylonian. In the XVIIIth chapter of the Ethiopic Book of Henoch, which belongs to the oldest part of this writing (IIIrd-IInd cent. B.C.), the seven stars "which have transgressed the commandment of the Lord in the beginning of their rising, because they did not come forth at their appointed times", are kept prisoners at "the end of heaven and earth", in the "prison for the stars and the host of heaven"[59]. If this idea of an imprisonment of the stars already existed in a Babylonian source, it is very possible that the Mandaeans took it from there, or perhaps from the Jews. It is quite sensible to suppose that, in their aversion to the planets (which is derived from Gnosticism), the Mandaeans have turned the Babylonian *stars*, punished for their guilt of disobedience, into evil *planets*. Were this hypothesis true, the Iranian stories might in fact have been borrowed from the Mandaeans. However, it is not necessary to go as far as that. Even the most approximate chronological order of the testimonies discussed above, shows that the Iranian legends come much later than the Babylonian motif and its early Jewish interpretation.

On the other hand, it is hardly credible that the Jewish-Babylonian story played even a remote role in the formation of Gnostic dualism. The Gnostic "demonization of the cosmos" presupposes a new vision of the world, which, as a whole, is neither Babylonian, nor Jewish, neither Greek, nor Iranian. Even if Bousset's theory were

true (which is unlikely), it still would not have any persuasive value, since the history of a part is not the history of the whole. It was to H.H. Schaeder's merit, that he contested the validity of Bousset's theories, in the light of this sound methodological tenet[60].

As far as the "Himmelsreise der Seele" was concerned, Anz's and, above all, Bousset's ideas were followed by all the other representatives of the "religionsgeschichtliche Schule". Only J. Kroll, whose work *Gott und Hölle* (1932), dealing with innumerable comparative testimonies, remains an example of scholarly accuracy, could claim any originality.

In 1931, Kroll held at the University of Cologne a conference with the title "Die Himmelfahrt der Seele in der Antike"[61], which might have appeared to many as both fashionable and revolutionary, in so far as it seemed to echo some of the ideas of the Jungian psychoanalysis. The universal human tendency to flight from the world and to the avoidance of worldly affairs would be based on a deep transcendental nostalgia[62].

Gott und Hölle, a 569-page book *in 6-o*[63], completely departing from any psychological interpretations, is an erudite attempt to explain the cultural context and the historical roots of Christ's descent to Hades. Kroll comes to the conclusion that this Christian legend is not related to a descent to Hell only, but to the whole operation implicating Christ's descent to the earth and return to heaven. The main presupposition of this action is that the world itself, and often the sky too, is the abode of the Evil. Being so, the world is in a position of absolute impotence, which requires the presence of a Redeemer in order to be abolished. (One recognizes here Reitzenstein's theories, which Kroll, however, does not seem to follow to their obvious conclusions).

From the analysis of Christian and Gnostic evidence, Kroll draws an important conclusion, namely that, in Late Antiquity, Hell is transferred from the underworld to the earth and above the earth, with the consequence that the old patterns of the underworldly journey are replaced now by a downward movement of the Saviour, from a far away heaven to the demonized universe. Kroll follows Bousset in his belief that the "demonization of the cosmos" derives from an "iranized Babylonian astral lore"[64].

Kroll thinks that the multiplicity of contemporary testimonies can be reduced to a main general scheme: that of the descensus incognitus, followed by an ascensus gloriosus, of a saviour[65]. The descensus and the ascensus are equivalent, only the direction in space is different[66]: "Der Ascensus durch die versperrten Sphären ist ein Descensus mit umgekehrten Vorzeichen, zumal bei diesem Weltbild überhaupt auch das Totenreich in den Gestirnsphären gesucht wird"[67]. Kroll opposes the "new" image of the world to an "ancient", traditional, image (*Weltbild*), in which Hell was underground and the gods or heroes descended under the surface of the earth. That is why he collects, in the main part of his book[68] testimonies concerning the underworldly journey in Ancient Egypt[69], Babylonia[70], India and Iran[71], in the religion of the Mandaeans[72], in the *Odes of Salomo*[73], in Manichaeism[74], in the Jewish religion[75], in Classical Antiquity[76], and, finally, in Magic[77].

As a good collection of materials, Kroll's book might still be valuable today, mainly for students in comparitive religion. Unfortunately, its methodological, as

well as historical, principles, deserve a complete and radical revision.

That a "new" image of the world replaces, in Late Antiquity, an "ancient" image, is only correct in so far as both images are *unitary*, which is certainly not the case. However, even admitting that the main *tendency* of Late Antique religiosity is to remove Hell above the earth, Kroll's generalizations go too far when he affirms that the descensus incognitus and the ascensus gloriosus form a constant pattern of that time. Certainly, this is an important, but not an unique pattern. The idea of an Iranian and Babylonian origin of the "Himmelsreise" and of the "demonization of the cosmos" belongs to W. Bousset, and has already been discussed above.

On the other hand, Kroll could not be properly called a "phenomenologist". Phenomenology of religion has some methodological principles, no matter how questionable. In this sense, Kroll, who does not seem to have any, is no more than a very serious and erudite antique collector. One could claim that he has, at least, the merit of replacing every phenomenon in its proper cultural context, without those extrapolations and generalizations which create the bad reputation of religious phenomenology. But this is not the case, in so far as in Kroll's view, the "ancient" religions are treated as representatives of an unique (no matter how diversified) *Weltbild*. Schaeder's objection to Bousset's methodology applies also to Kroll's masterpiece as a whole.

In conclusion, the "religionsgeschichtliche Schule" is responsible for the propagation of a set of ideas that, both in their methodological and historical aspects, are inconsistent. This manifold fallacy had also ideological implications which could lead to dangerous consequences. A general exposing of the latter still waits for an author and a publisher to attempt it.

CHAPTER THREE

A CHALLENGE: THE THEORY OF THE GREEK ORIGINS

The "religionsgeschichtliche Schule", no matter how influential, does not enjoy the prestige of ancientness. In 1867, J.J. Bachofen was already deeply concerned with the Greek beliefs in the After Life and their transmission down to Plutarch[1]. Between 1890-1894, Erwin Rohde's *Psyche* was published, an extremely consequential work for the study of the ecstatic phenomena. In 1893 appeared A. Dieterich's *Nekyia*, an exemplary piece of research into the Greek origins of the eschatological beliefs of Late Antiquity.

While Rohde went occasionally beyond his professional limits, widening the scope of his book to that of a comparative inquiry, Dieterich only seldom made any step outside the Classical world. However, the views held by these two authors were not entirely divergent and possibly complemented one another. Rohde and Dieterich might be considered as the first representatives of the only accredited theory, capable of challenging the dominant fashion dictated by the "religionsgeschichtliche Schule": the theory of the Greek origin of the *Himmelsreise*. Certainly, it would be a mistake to exaggerate the affinities between these two scholars: Rohde was not loath to seek the origin of ecstatic cults outside Greece, and Dieterich later became a convert to the ideas of the "religionsgeschichtliche Schule". Anyway, they shared, to a certain extent, the same basic principle: The beliefs of Late Antiquity were the outcome of an inner development, of a process occurring within the framework of the Greek and Roman religions.

In his interpretation of Greek religion, Rohde emphasized the role of the ancient chtonian divinities, of the Apollinian mantic phenomena, and, above all, of the "Thracian" god Dionysus. In doing so, he followed an evolutionary pattern, which led from the "ancient" religious layer of the underground divinities and heroes to Plato's philosophy. Chtonian cults and myths were authentically Greek, though shared by many other peoples of the world. On the contrary, Dionysus was an imported god, his native land being Thrace[2]. His ecstatic cult, previously unknown in Greece, presented many affinities - Rohde believed - with shamanism, yoga, and other kindred phenomena. In the Dionysiac idea of a separable element, the soul, able to fly when her bonds with the body were loosened, Rhode saw the origin of the belief in immortality and of Platonic mysticism. In dealing with Apollinian seers like Abaris, Aristeas, Hermotimus and others, Rohde[3] neither noticed their real affinities with the shamans, nor seemed to postulate that a different ideology from that of Dionysism underlay their exploits. In fact, Dionysism took, in Rohde's opinion, such proportions, that it absorbed a good part of the religious beliefs and cults of Ancient Greece.

A criticism of Rohde's view of the Greek religion would fall beyond the scope of this survey. As far as our subject matter is concerned, his work is important because

it emphasizes the continuity of ecstatic phenomena from Dionysism down to Late Antiquity. Rohde's phenomenology of extasy is certainly subject to amendments. Dionysism, which is not imported from Thrace (although the god Dionysus himself is a stranger in Greece)[4], does not form the background for a further development of the ideas concerning the immortality of the soul, mysticism and asceticism. The apocalyptic genre in Greece does not rise within Dionysiac circles, but within the circles of "seers and medicine men" (*iatroi kai manteis*, shortly "iatromantes", as E.R. Dodds puts it) such as Abaris, Aristeas, Epimenides, Hermotimus, Pythagoras and others, whose activity is connected with a (Hyperborean) god called Apollo. It is now a common opinion that a single ideology underlies the exploits of these early prophets, but, even if it were not so, a case like that of Empedocles certainly points out the very direction where the origins of Platonic dualism (i.e., fall of the individual soul in the world, metensomatosis, and philosophical detachment) are to be sought.

Rohde's book was a vast synthesis, not a specific inquiry into the background of Late Antique beliefs. Dieterich's *Nekyia* was exactly the opposite: a thorough analysis of the origin of every motif occuring in the large fragment of the Greek Apocalypse of Peter discovered at Akhmim. This writing, mentioned by Clement of Alexandria, Methodius of Olympus and Macarius, was a Christian apocalypse of the second half of the IInd century A.D.[5]. Dieterich has patiently shown in his research that almost every single passage of the text could be fully explained in the light of very ancient beliefs, already held by Greek authors of the Vth cent. B.C., but actually going back to a still earlier phase of the Greek religion. Only a few categories of sinners were directly inherited from Jewish-Christian beliefs concerning the expiation of faults in Hell[6]. But the structure of Heaven and Hell, as well as the forms of expiation, were Greek[7].

The search for the remote origins of a phenomenon does not enjoy much popularity today. However, Dieterich's *Nekyia* is extremely important, in so far as it shows the persistency and continuity of early beliefs, down to Late Antiquity. On the other hand, the beliefs in question are neither Iranian, nor Jewish, but purely Greek.

Rohde's *Psyche* and, to a certain extent, also Dieterich's *Nekyia*, are dedicated to the study of general subjects. The "ascension of the soul" is dealt with there, only in so far as it forms one of the manifestations of extasy, or, respectively, of the apocalyptical genre. Neither Rohde, nor Dieterich, are specifically concerned with the true origin of this motif, although Rohde believes that it is derived from Thracian Dionysism, and Dieterich, that it belongs to the mentality of the Orphics and Phytagoreans.

If we part from his very questionable hypothesis of the Iranian and Babylonian background of the *Himmelsreise*, W. Bousset seems to be the first scholar whose deep insight and outstanding competence enable him to percieve the extent, and to define the limits, of this phenomenon within the Greek world. Bousset, as so many scholars after him, believes that Plato's apocalypse of Er depends on an Iranian model[8]. Apart from this debatable opinion, he does not indulge in idle commentaries, but traces the outline of the specific problems related to the transmission of Plato's ideas down to Late Antiquity. He insists on the role that Xenocrates might

have had in this process, and shows the incompatibility between Stoic ideas of the imponderability of the fiery soul and the latter's descent to the underworld[9], the importance of Posidonius in the formation of the new eschatological ideas embodied in Plutrach's myth[10], and the uninterrupted continuity of the Greek apocalyptical tradition, from Aristeas of Proconnesus[11] to Plutarch.

Had Bousset's influential article on the *Himmelsreise der Seele* not been written, the whole recent scholarship would have looked entirely different. F. Cumont, and the important debates that his works have given rise to, were in a very large measure dependent, for better or worse, upon Bousset's outline.

Rohde, Dieterich, and Bousset, whose ideas were more or less widely divergent, had however one thing in common: they agreed in considering that much of the apocalyptical beliefs of Late Antiquity relied on an ancient tradition within the Greek world. For Rohde, the key-figure of that tradition was the Thracian god Dionysus; for Rohde, it was a genuine Greek tradition; for Bousset, it was an Iranian tradition of the heavenly ascension, resumed by Plato in the myth of Er. As for what was *before* Plato, the three scholars disagreed: for Rohde, it was Dionysus, but he also pointed out the quasi-universality of shamanistic or kindred beliefs; for Dieterich[12], it was an Orphico-Pythagorean trend; for Bousset, it was Persia. *Three main scholarly trends developed from the respective positions of these three outstanding scholars.*

1) *The shamanistic theory*, already outlined in Rohde's *Psyche*, is resumed by K. Meuli in a famous article of 1935[13]. Meuli, who believes that the Scythian shamans used hallucinogens in their practices, is largely dependent on the theories of the School of Vienna[14]. He also thinks that Aristeas, Abaris and Zalmoxis are shamans[15]. The legends of Parmenides, Pythagoras, and many episodes of the Greek epic poems and legends, have shamanistic flavour[16]. According to Meuli, Greek shamanism is partly due to the influence of the Scythians in the VIIth century B.C.[17], partly to an inner historico-cultural process that the Greeks themselves underwent, like all the other peoples of the world.

E.R. Dodds, another supporter, with F.M. Cornford[18], of the shamanistic theory, obviously did not understand the assumptions of Meuli, to whom he ascribed only "risky speculations". As a matter of fact, Dodds believed too that the peculiar Greek form of shamanism was derived both from the Scythians and from an inner aboriginal element, i.e., the figure of the "godly man" (*theios aner*)[19].

More recently, M. Eliade[20] expresssed himself against the inclusion of the Greek seers in the category of the shamans, and insisted upon their autochthonous origin.

From the early thirties to the early fifties, the shamanistic theory was very fashionable in various circles. In 1938, H.H. Schaeder translated into German H.S. Nyberg's *Religions of Ancient Iran*[21], a very influential work in which the Swedish scholar tried to demonstrate that Zoroaster, the Persian religious reformer, had been a sort of shaman. This hypothesis has been mocked by W. Henning in a well-known pamphlet[22], whose arguments were, unfortunately, more brilliant than reliable.

As far as only the Greek "iatromantes" (seers and medicine-men) are concerned,

W. Burkert[23] and J. Bremmer[24] agree upon the fact that they represent a peculiar category of ecstatics, different from, and sometimes in concurrence with, the Bacchants. Whether or not one calls them shamans is a matter of pure convention. At any rate, the Greek apocalyptic genre originates in their midst[25], and Plato is largely dependent upon traditional data obtained by these seers during their visionary trances. The *Arimaspeia* of Aristeas could not be anything but the description of such a "trip"[26].

In conclusion, the shamanistic theory, if not quite succesful, has at least provided a very reasonable explanation of the origin of the Greek apocalypses. Of the three theories discussed in this chapter, this seems to be the most neutral in so far as it tries to include Pythagoreanism in a wider range of religious relevant phenomena.

2) *The Pythagorean theory* became increasingly important with A. Delatte's *Etudes sur la littérature phytagoricienne*[27]. Delatte assigns the celestial eschatology of Late Antiquity to an uninterrupted Pythagorean underground tradition. The descensus/ascensus of the soul, with its variants, would belong to this long tradition[28].

G. Méautis has probably been the most typical representative of this trend. His *Recherches sur le Pythagorisme*, whose title echoes that of Delatte's main work, appeared in 1922[29]. According to Méautis, the perfect embodiment of the Pythagorean lore in Late Antiquity were the myths of Plutarch. In 1935, he translated Plutarch's treatise *De sera numinis vindicta*[30] and supplied it with an introduction.

Méautis's interpretations are not entirely scientific. The author enjoys esoteric allusions, speaks as from one initiate to another, and has a patent nostalgia for secret societies. His basic, somewhat ingenuous, idea, is that of a continuity of a Pythagorean doctrine down to Free Masonry and Theosophy. He often quotes from authors such as Rudyard Kipling and even from M^{me} Blavatsky, taking, however, every possible caution not to compromise himself.

Méautis's naïveté was not Delatte's only legacy. In France, the "Pythagorean school" became and remained influential, through representatives like L. Rougier, P. Boyancé, G. Soury, and M. Detienne.

Rougier, whose book *L'origine astronomique de la croyance pythagoricienne en l'immortalité céleste des âmes* appeared in 1933[31], believed that the idea of the ascension of the soul to the sky had a Pythagorean origin. His whole theory was based on the assumption that the Pythagorean doctrine of universal harmony, whose most important implication was the regularity of the planetary marches, had led to the "scientific revolution" which consisted in "showing that all the peculiarities of the apparent movements of the planets could be accounted for, provided that one combined a small number of circular and uniform movements, all of them as simple and regular as the daily revolution of the sky of the fixed stars"[32]. In other words, according to the Pythagoreans, there had to be an explanation for the contradiction between the circular, regular, trajectories of the planets, and how these trajectories appeared to the observer. Crooked as the ways of the planets in the sky were, the Babylonians had still been able to draw, from simple observations, very exact maps in which the position of every planet at every moment could be found. The Greek novelty in comparison with the Babylonians did not precisely consist of a better computation system, but of an entirely new

theoretical approach to the astral world. In fact, for the Babylonians, the seven planets moved on the same plane, i.e., at the same constant distance from the earth. According to the Greek astronomers, the planets moved at different distances from the earth, depending on the respective lengths of their revolutions. To conciliate direct observation with speculative thinking, Eudoxus of Cnidus, born at the end of the Vth cent. B.C., imagined a system of homocentrical spheres, which could account for the various, irregular, marches of the planets. This system became increasingly complicated in the works of Callipus of Cyzicus and Aristoteles.

On the other hand, the different distances of the Seven to the earth composed a planetary series, usually called "Chaldaean" (Moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn). Archimedes was probably already acquainted with the "Chaldean" order, while Plato used the so-called "Egyptian" order (Moon, Sun, Venus, Mercury, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn). Plato, and the author of the dialogue *Epinomis*, were aware of the particularities of the march of Venus and Mercury, but the first to formulate the theory of the two satellites of the Sun ("helio-satellitic" or "geo-heliocentric" theory) was probably one of Plato's disciples, Heraclides Ponticus[33]. J. Flamant has demonstrated that Heraclides's model, according to which Mercury and Venus revolve around the Sun, could perfectly account for the differences between the "Chaldaean" and the "Egyptian" planetary orders[34].

For Rougier, the Pythagoreans were the very ones responsible for this extremely consequential development of the Greek science. Another consequence of the "Pythagorean astronomy" would have been the dualistic view of the world, i.e., the distinction between the "higher" world of astral harmonic revolutions *above* the Moon, and the "lower" world of coarse matter *under* the Moon. While the astral bodies were made of incorruptible fire or aether, all things under the Moon were mixtures of the four elements, and thus corruptible. The soul, being a celestial body fallen from the sky in consequence of an original fault, would return to its origin after the death of the physical body[35]. Like Delatte Rougier believed that the doctrine of reincarnation or metensomatosis was Pythagorean; like Méautis, he thought that the purification of the soul in a sublunar purgatory had a Pythagorean origin[36].

P. Boyancé was ready to accept Rougier's views[37], but seemed particularly inclined to emphasize the role of Plato's disciples (Xenocrates, Crantor, Heraclides Ponticus) in generalizing the celestial eschatology, and to diminish the importance of Posidonius as a transmitter of these ideas[38].

According to common opinion, F. Cumont's views were particularly different from Rougier's. This impression might actually have been enforced by the fact that Cumont had criticized Rougier's dissertation of 1933. However, the divergence between the two scholars was not as great as it seemed. Cumont was also convinced that Pythagoras and his followers were the authors of a "scientific revolution" within the Greek world. He also held that celestial eschatology, metensomatosis and sublunar purgatory occurred in Pythagoreanism. But Cumont believed - and here lay the main difference between him and Rougier - that Pythagoreanism had inherited all these doctrines from the so-called "Chaldaeans", i.e., Iranian Magi settled in Mesopotamia and then in Asia Minor. For Cumont, Rougier's theory was certainly pertinent, but only within the borders of Greek and Roman culture. The Belgian scholar thought that the Pythagoreans had taken from Persia the motif of

the ascension of the soul to heaven, and from India the doctrine of reincarnation (see below).

The most radical criticism of Rougier came from W. Burkert in the early sixties. According to the German scholar, the idea of a "Pythagorean revolution" would only be a "dangerous oversimplification". Burkert still agreed with Cumont's theory of Oriental influences, but was ready to emphasize the contribution of popular beliefs and of the early Ionian philosophers in generalizing celestial eschatology: "That the human soul has a very close relationship to the sky and the stars, and even that it comes from heaven and returns to it, is... generally held belief in Ionian *physiologia*, at least from the time of Heraclitus and Anaxagoras. In the garb of *physiologia*, and in 'materialist' phraseology, what starts as a *doxa* continues to exert its influence sometimes with more emphasis on salvation of the soul, and sometimes with more on general thought of microcosm and macrocosm: man is made of portions of the cosmos, and in death like returns to like"[39]. The distinction between a supralunar and a sublunar world, would not seem to go back any further than Aristotle[40].

The "Pythagorean school", above all G. Méautis, gave a special emphasis to Plutarch's eschatological myths as a grandiose synthesis of Pythagorean motifs. In his *La démonologie de Plutarque*, which, in many respects, still deserves to be read, G. Soury closely followed Méautis's interpretations[41]. In his *La notion de Daïmon dans le pythagorisme ancien*, M. Detienne[42] still relied on Plutarch's *de facie* and other testimonies, in order to reconstitute a Pythagorean "lunar demonology". Recently, J. Hani has come up with a shamanistic interpretation of the myth of Timarch in Plutarch's *de genio Socratis*[43]. In our article *Inter lunam terrasque*, we have tried to show that the hypothesis of Pythagorean influences on Plutarch's myths was nothing but an arbitrary expedient that served to put a label on materials belonging to an archaic mental patterns, as J. Hani had also noticed. Plutarch depended, on one hand, on Plato, and on the other hand, on a popular tradition which was "Pythagorean" only in so far as Pythagoreanism itself had absorbed and interpreted it[44].

3) *Franz Cumont* (Jan. 3, 1868 - Aug. 8, 1947), the author of a vast synthesis concerning the eschatological beliefs of Antiquity, was indebted both to the German "religionsgeschichtliche Schule" and to the French "Pythagorean school", with a preference for the former. His interest in astral mysticism and psychanody rose from the study of Greek and Roman astrology. The first work where, in embryonic form, one might find the ideas later resumed and improved in his *Recherches sur le symbolisme funéraire des Romains* (1942) and *Lux perpetua* (1949), is his *Astrology and Religion among the Greeks and Romans* (1912)[45], followed, in 1922, by *After Life in Roman Paganism*[46].

Astrology and Religion might be considered as a short, descriptive, outline of the religious mentality connected with astrology. The most interesting chapter of this book is the VIth, relating to the transformation of the eschatological beliefs into a generalization of the idea of a sidereal survival after death[47]. Emphasis was put on the role of Posidonius in this process, on the representation of a sublunar purgatory, and on the doctrine of the descent of the soul through the spheres.

In *After Life*, two philosophers of Apamea in Syria, Posidonius and Numenius, received special attention.

According to Cumont[48], Posidonius was the man who combined astral Oriental beliefs, Pythagoreanism, Platonism and Stoicism in an influential synthesis, or, as he formulated it, the intermediary "between Plato and Cicero". K. Reinhardt, who agreed with some of these assumptions, expressed however many reservations in connection with the role of Posidonius as a mediator[49]. R. Jones minimised the influence of the Posidonian ideas concerning the celestial eschatology[50], and P. Boyancé eventually came to the conclusion that our knowledge of the doctrine of the wise man of Apamea is too fragmentary to admit any decisive statements about his position and his role in the philosophical debates of that time[51].

Under the pressure of these arguments, Cumont undertook, in *Lux perpetua*, a slight revision of the positions previously held[52].

During F. Cumont's life, his theory concerning Numenius of Apamea, as the author of the doctrine of the passage of the soul through the planetary spheres, had not yet been seriously challenged. In editing the fragments of the numenian doxographies, E.A. Leemans[53] followed Cumont's views. In 1940, R. Beutler noticed that the source, i.e. Macrobius's *Commentary* on Cicero's *Dream of Scipio*[54], explicitely ascribed to Numenius and Cronius only the theory of the transit of the soul through the two celestial gates, situated in the signs of Cancer and Capricorn, not the passage through the spheres[55]. Like his master J.H. Waszink, and A.J. Festugière, M.A. Elferink[56] followed Beutler's opinion, while H. De Ley[57], later supported by J. Flamant[58], came up in defence of Leeman's thesis. In his last edition of Numenius's *Fragments*, E. Des Places seemed to be convinced by Beutler's arguments, since he left aside Macrobius's account of the passage through the spheres[59]. However, if J. Flamant were right, then Numenius could have been acquainted with the theory put forward by Macrobius (and also by Porphyry, Arnobius, Servius and Proclus, and probably also by Jamblichus). At any rate, Numenius was not the *author* of this doctrine, whose origin had probably to be sought in the Hermetic lay-astrology, namely in the treatise *Panaretos* ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus[60]. The Gnostics Basilides and his son Isidorus, the Valentinians, the authors of *Pistis Sophia* and those of the Hermetic *Poimandres*, knew this idea, which probably circulated in the popular Gnostic books of the first half of the IInd century A.D.[61].

Cumont's general outlook did not undergo, from *After Life* to *Lux perpetua*, any decisive change. The Belgian scholar tried to find a middle course between the representatives of the "religionsgeschichtliche Schule" and the French "Pythagorean school". He believed firmly in Bousset's ideas concerning the Iranian origin of the ascension of the soul to the sky[62] and the difference between the ancient, Iranian, pattern of ascension through three heavenly layers, as distinguished from the later, Babylonian, sevenfold pattern. Cumont held even that the "Chaldean" order of the planets was truly Babylonian[63]. He was convinced that the Iranian Magi of Asia Minor, the "Chaldeans", had transmitted their Oriental lore to the Pythagoreans of Sicily[64]. Plato had been in touch with both Pythagoreans and "Chaldeans", and the myth of Er in his *Republic* was due to the teachings of the latter[65]. The Pythagorean tradition continued on down to Late Antiquity[66].

Apart from these ideas, which might seem somewhat old-fashioned, Cumont remains the greatest scholar who ever attempted a wide, evolutionary, synthesis of the eschatological beliefs of the Ancient world. His influence on modern scholarship has been so overwhelming, that recent rebellions and general rejections of his works should not surprise us. After all, his assumptions remained unquestioned for such a long time, that it seemed necessary to place them under the critical lenses of the younger generations of philologists, archeologists and historians of religions. When this painful operation would be achieved, the grandness of Cumont's work would only enjoy a new and more stable emphasis.

PART TWO

A HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE PRINCIPAL PROBLEMS RELATING TO THE ASCENSION OF THE SOUL

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ORIGINS OF THE APOCALYPTIC GENRE

The character called *iatromantis* is the key-figure of the Greek tradition of ecstatic phenomena connected with the god Apollo. The Greek medicine-man is, in many respects, related to the shamans of Central and North Asia; furthermore, the exploits he claims to be able to perform are of the same order as those of his Asian, Australian and American fellows.

Recent scholarship has the tendency to make a careful distinction between Greek ecstatic *collective cults*, and solitary healers, seers and mediums connected with Apollo[1]. Both kinds of extasy were also known to the Jews, where characters such as Elijah and his disciple Elishah (IXth cent. B.C.) had "Pythagorean" features, while the *nebi'im*, as already G. Hoelscher (*Die Propheten*, 1914) noticed, were very similar to the Bacchants[2].

The prophet Elijah, carried off to the sky in a fiery chariot[3], resembles the Greek pre-Socratic philosopher Parmenides, who travelled on the solar chariot beyond the gates of Day and Night[4]. When disappearing forever, Elijah left his mantle behind, as evidence that he had once been there. According to Hippobotus, one of the skeptical interpreters of the ancient Greek traditions, Empedocles, who wanted his fellow-citizens to believe that he had become a god, committed suicide by flinging himself down into Etna, but the volcano threw up one of his golden sandals[5]. C. Grottanelli thinks that Hippobotus's rationalized version fails to mask the true story of the sandal: i.e., that it was meant to be left behind by Empedocles, as a proof of his stay on the earth. That is why Grottanelli holds that Elijah and Empedocles belong to a Mediterranean pattern of prophets who eventually perform, when still alive, the *translatio ad deos*[6].

The data concerning the Jewish seers are very scarce in comparison with those relating to the Greek iatromantes, but, nevertheless, if Grottanelli's guess is right, then we might assume that Greek and Jewish prophecy and medicine were similar.

What were the competencies of the Greek iatromantes?

Each one could be a medicine-man (*iatros*), a seer (*mantis*), a traveller of the air (*aithrobatês*), a purifier (*kathartês*), an author of oracles (*chresmologos*) and a performer of miracles (*thaumatourgos*). They were able to transport themselves at long distances, in spirit, but also bodily. The testimonies did not mention whether they were supposed to use euphoric or hallucinogenic substances, but recent researches on the properties of psychotropic and psychedelic drugs[7] would rather incline the balance in favour of such a hypothesis. At any rate, one of their most striking features is the "abstinence syndrome": they seem to eat very little, if at all, and they avoid - some testimonies say it explicitly - sexual intercourse.

The case of Epimenides of Crete is interesting in this respect. This seer (who is said to have slept on for some decades in the cave of Zeus in Crete) used to eat a very small quantity of a plant called *alimos*, in order to keep himself alive[8]. Cherniss

and Helmbold translate *alimos* by "Hungerbane", which seems very apt, since this name comes from ἀ-λιμος, literally "without-hunger". But there might be a further meaning in this pun: ἅλιμος, which differs from ἄλιμος only by a rough aspirate, is in reality the name of *Atriplex Halimus* (*L.*), a plant of the Chenopodiaceae family, so called because it grows in the proximity of the sea (this is the primary meaning of the adjective *hálimos*, from *hals, halós*, "sea"). Our story would not have gone any further, had not Antiphanes, one of the most popular authors of comedies of the IVth century B.C., ascribed to the Pythagoreans the use of this plant in their poor diet[9]. However, apart from Plutarch, and a long time before him, the Vth century writer Herodorus of Heraclea, author of a Hercules–saga, used the name *alimos* to indicate a "hungerbane" that saved the life of the Greek hero[10]. It should scarcely surprise us that Porphyry, in his *Life of Pythagoras*[11], stated that Pythagoras also ate this *alimos* (perhaps instead of *halimos*). Porphyry's assumption might be based on the confusion between the metaphorical name *alimos* and the real *halimos*, a traditional Pythagorean food, which very probably had nothing to do with one another: while the *halimos* provided a poor physical sustenance, the marvelous *alimos* was not, in all probability, a merely mythical plant, but a somewhat rare species containing some alkaloid holding hunger in abeyance. Furthermore, apart from the obviously exaggerated information concerning the length of Epimenides's sleep, it seems very reasonable to infer that his hallucinatory trance is induced by an appropriate drug. However, this is only a speculation, while the idea that the otherwise unknown *alimos* is a real plant seems to be supported by the existence of the Coca plant in Peru, Bolivia (*Erythroxylon coca*) and Columbia (*E. novogranatense*). In his *History of Coca, "The Divine Plant" of the Incas*[12], dr. W. Golden Mortimer claims that neither the plant coca, nor the alkaloid cocaine, are hallucinogenic[13]. Cieza, who was a mere boy of fourteen when he embarked, in 1532, with Don Pedro de Heredia, reported in his chronicle (1550) that the Indians of Peru chew coca leaves "from morning until they lie down", because "it prevents them from feeling hungry, and gives them great vigor and strength"[14].

Aristeas's bodily or perhaps merely spiritual transformation into a raven is, as we have already mentioned[15], a wide-spread experience to which the properties of hallucinogenic substances are able to provide a sensible explanation.

Abstinence from food is one of the common distinctive features of the whole class of iatromantes. Abaris is said to avoid food[16]; Pythagoras, according to some testimonies[17] dies of starvation, like the hero Trophonius[18]. Furthermore, Epimenides, as well as Abaris, Aristeas, Bakis, Hermotimus, (Pherecides of Syrus) and Pythagoras, is a *seer*, capable of foretelling the Persian war ten years before it happens[19]. According to Pausanias, the Spartans killed him because he prophesied a disaster[20]. Like Abaris, Bakis and Empedocles, Epimenides was also a *purifier* (*cathartês*), or even *the* purifier *par excellence* who drove away the *miasma* from Athens at the time of Solon[21]. Like Empedocles and Pythagoras, he was able to recall his previous incarnations[22]. He believed he had been Aeacus, brother of Minos and he was said to have slept on for 57 years in the cave of Zeus where Minos used to visit his godly father every eight years[23]. As well as Empedocles in Acragas, the poet (*chresmologos*) Epimenides was worshipped by the Cretans as a sort of local divinity[24] and received from them the name of *néos koúrês*, which established a

close relationship between him and Zeus[25]. His long trance, during which his soul had visited the gods and listened to their speeches, earned him the reputation of being an expert in catalepsy. That is why he was said to have escorted Pythagoras into the Idean cave, when the latter prophet came back from his journey to the Magi[26]. Jamblichus, who obviously rationalized the same legend, transformed him into a pupil of Pythagoras[27].

Catalepsy, connected with the god Apollo, was not unfrequent in Greece. Aristeas died suddenly in a fuller's shop in Proconnesus, but his corpse mysteriously disappeared while the fuller went to acquaint the family of his decease. Someone saw the seer on his way to Cyzicus. Six years later, he came back to Proconnesus, wrote his *Arimaspeia*, and then disappeared again. This man, who was said to be a *phoibolamptos*, i.e. "possessed by Apollo", appeared after 240 years in Metapontum, at the side of the god himself, in the somewhat strange form of a raven[28]. So far Herodotus, who probably knew only one side of the story. The other side, mentioned by Maximum of Tyrus[29], says that Aristeas's soul had the faculty to take the shape of a bird (a raven, according to Pliny[30]) and perform long journeys. That is how he went to the Hyperboreans and wrote the account of his - literally as well as figuratively - "trip". If things are really so, then it is quite understandable why no one has ever been able to discover, on a geographical map, the route followed by Aristeas: the "aerobate" used to fly in a dimension for which no map could account.

Hermotimus of Clazomenae used to dedicate himself to the same sort of activities: leaving the body in a state "between death and life", his soul visited far away places and there registered local events, which the seer was able to report when recovering from his trance. During one of these trips, his wife[31] delivered the lifeless body to his enemies, the Cantharidae, who burned it, thus preventing the soul from coming back to her sheath (*remeanti animae veluti vaginam ademerint*)[32]. Apollonius adds further that no woman is given admittance to Hermotimus's temple, by reason of the betrayal of his wife[33].

Was Hermotimus really, as M. Detienne believed[34], only a marginal figure, scorned by his fellow-men who did not understand his way of life and the value of his experience? Nothing could be more wrong than this reductive interpretation of the story reported by Pliny. The *kantharos* was the attribute of Dionysus[35], and the name *Cantharidae* indicated, in all probability, that Hermotimus's enemies belonged to a powerful Dionysiac brotherhood, a *hetairia*. When taken over by his killers, Hermotimus's body was *naked*, which was the mark of a medium practising his art[36]. Hermotimus of Clazomenae was a medium who did not want to follow Dionysiac methods to obtain extasy; that was why the Dionysiac brotherhood wanted to get rid of their rival, and eventually succeeded in doing so.

Catalepsy, frequently related to Apollo, was sometimes experienced, indeed, as something abnormal. The Ist cent. A.D. Latin poet Lucanus reported that the soul of a Roman matron "possessed by Apollo" flew over the earth, while her body went aimlessly through the streets of the city[37]. Empedocles, founder of the Sicilian school of medicine, was famous for his treatment of catalepsy. This outstanding medicine-man dedicated a work *Perì tèn ápnoun* (*On catalepsy*) to his friend Pausanias, as Diogenes Laërtius, citing Heraclides Ponticus, reported[38]. Heraclides, *apud* Diogenes, gave the following definition of catalepsy, according to its symptoms:

"It is an illness which keeps the body alive, although breathless and pulseless". Quoting probably from the same work of Heraclides, Pliny gives another description of the paradoxical state in which *mortuum videri non tamen esse*: *"Feminarum sexus huic malo videtur maxime opportunus conversione vulvae: quae si corrigatur, spiritus restituitur. Huc pertinet nobile apud Graecos volumen Heraclidis, septem diebus feminae exanimis ad vitam revocatae"*[39].

The connection between extasy and ancient medicine is not casual, as the legends of Phormion and Leonymus will show. The *heros iatros* (hero-healer) is a character occurring in Homeric times[40], and the conception underlying the various stories connected with this figure is clearly homeopathic.

Phormion, already mentioned by the poet Cratinus[41], is the leading character in a story written by Theopompus[42] and preserved by the *Suda*. Phormion, a citizen of Croton, took part in the war at Sagra against the Locrians[43]. One of the Dioscuri, who fought the battle on the side of the Locrians, wounded him. An oracle told him to go to Sparta, where the first man to invite him to dinner, would also cure him. Phormion went to Sparta where, indeed, a young man invited him home and, after he was told about Phormion's expectations, cured him on the spot. This tale is actually very akin to the homeopathic legends of Telephus[44] and Leonymus of Athens[45], both of them healed by the same heroes who wounded them in battle[46]. But here another significant fact comes in to change the meaning of the whole story: when Phormion leaves the house of his host, who is the same Dioscurus who previously wounded him, he suddenly notices that he is standing before the door of his own house in Croton. Another time, when Phormion celebrates the *theoxeniai* in the presence of two guests who might be the Dioscuri themselves, the latter invite him to Cyrene, to meet Battus. Phormion stands up to comply with their request, and, suddenly, he notices that he is holding in his hand a small stick of laser[47].

This story deserves special attention. The *teoxenial* were a special feast at which the Dioscuri themselves were supposed to be present. Phormion, who seems to play the role of the skeptic at least in this second story, does not open the door to his guests. That is why they eventually convince him of their supernatural powers[48]. Laser, a resin extracted from *silphium* or *laserpitium*, happened to be the principal merchandise of Cyrene, whose king Battus had set up rites in honour of the Dioscuri[49]. With some effort, the reader might understand that, while he stood up, Phormion had already been in Cyrene and had returned home[50].

The well-known ambiguity of the *heros iatros*, a hero who cures the wound he has himself inflicted, is connected with very interesting eschatological beliefs, in the legend of Leonymus of Athens. The latter was wounded by Ajax in the same battle of Sagra. An oracle told him to go to Leuké, the White Island. Names such as Leuké, Lykia - the Homeric land where Sarpedon was brought after death[51] -, Aitiopis, the Leukades rocks, had to be understood symbolically. The Leucades were simply the entrance to the Kingdom of Death: to pass them meant actually "to be dead"[52]. It is very likely that Leuké or Aitiopis could not be attained unless by passing this last border between life and death. According to A. Dieterich, promised lands such as Leuké, Lykia, Aitiopis, the Isles of the Blessed, Hyperborea, although not identical with one another, belonged to the same archaic pattern of a

solar paradise accessible to dead heroes and to ecstatics[53]. Thus, not only was the voyage Leonymus had to accomplish long and mysterious, but there was also the danger of never coming back. However, Leonymus went there, met Achilles, Ajax and the beautiful Helena, and returned home completely healed. Furthermore, he brought to the blind Stesichorus the message of Helena, who told the poet to write his "Palinody" in order to recover his sight[54]. The logic of the latter legend is the same as those reported above: the heroine, together with the Dioscuri, had caused Stesichorus's blindness[55]. They were thus the only ones who could cure him.

The iatromantes themselves had a strong relation with the Northern solar paradise Hyperborea, where the god Apollo ruled over his blessed people. A.H. Krappe has surmised that Apollo was actually the god of Abalo, the "Isle of the Apples" (of the Hesperides), the medieval Avalon[56]. But traditions concerning the Isles of the Blessed are very wide-spread. The Hyperboreans, who, according to the *Arimaspeia*, attain the age of 1000 years, are very akin to the mythical people of the Uttarakurus according to Indian testimonies[57]. The Greeks, through Megasthenes perhaps, were acquainted with the Indian tradition. Pliny describes the Hyperborean-like *Attacori* of North Asia[58], and Ptolemaeus cites the name Ottorokorrai, too close to the original to give room to the hypothesis of a coincidence[59]. It is, however, not necessary to suppose that the Greeks have borrowed their legends either from the Indians, or from the Celts. A. Dieterich has shown that the ancient Greek evidence concerning a Northern paradise was already very coherent.

The early Greek beliefs connected with the iatromantes and with the Isles of the Blessed are sufficient to explain the great Platonic eschatological myths[60]. Er, leading character in the myth of the Xth Book of the *Republic*, was a cataleptic like Empedocles's patients. His apocalypse was based on the same sort of ecstatic experience as those of Aristeas, Epimenides, and Hermotimus.

The myths of Hyperborea and the Isles of the Blessed occur in the cosmological and eschatological passages of *Phaedon* and *Gorgias*. According to Plato, the earth is a sphere in the middle of the universe[61]. Men live at the bottom of deep clefts while the surface of the earth reaches to the starry sky. Because of our inability to fly out from the inferior regions where we are bound, we ignore the existence of this "True Earth". But even if we could climb above the atmosphere and beyond the aether, this adventure would be as dangerous as the attempt of a fish to leave water and breath in the air. Much strength is needed, to pass from a coarser to a finer element, to stand the sight of the True Light, the True Sky, the True Earth.

The earth where we live is crumbly; the True Earth is incorruptible, made of precious stones much superior to those known to men, full of gold and silver, of marvelous trees and animals, peopled by a superior race living between air and aether as we live between earth and air. These marvelous people, who navigate on air as we navigate on sea, enjoy an eternally constant and mild climate, are not subject to illness and decay, and contemplate in their temples the gods face to face.

In the dialogue *Gorgias* (523a ff), the firm places on the airy ocean, where the inhabitants of the True Earth live, are called "isles". It is very easy to recognize in them the Isles of the Blessed, which people were looking for on the horizontal dimension, but were instead to be sought, according to Plato's whole ontology, on the vertical, high above the human world.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CELESTIAL ESCHATOLOGY AND ITS TRANSFORMATIONS

Plato has removed the Isles of the Blessed to somewhere in the sky, according to the presuppositions of his ontology and cosmology: what is lower is coarser, the elements are ranged on a vertical scale from gross (earth, water) to finer (air, aether, starry fire).

However, after death, only the souls of the righteous have the privilege of abiding at the earth's surface, or even higher, in close vicinity to the eternal ideas. Moreover, neither the staying on the True Earth, nor the contemplation of the hyperuranian essences are in all cases supposed to be everlasting. For smaller merits, they last only for a definite period of time, after which the soul must choose again an incarnation on the earth.

After judgement, the soul of the Unjust goes to the underground Hell, where the generally verticallity of Plato's system is again respected: the worse the soul, the deeper she goes into the bowels of the earth, and the worst of all, those of the tyrants and criminals, go down into the deepest region of the Tartarus. King Ardiaeus, for instance, had been sentenced to a punishment of that kind.

We have already mentioned many times that Plato's legacy has had the tendency to transfer the underground Hell to the sky. As for the author of this transformation, opinions vary, but many scholars believe that Heraclides Ponticus would be the most likely candidate.

Heraclides Ponticus, born at Heraclea on the Pontus between 388-373, frequented the Academy in 364 or before. In 338, he had the ambition to follow Speusippus, but he failed and then went back to his native town. In the good old tradition of the iatromantes, whose admirer he was, he tried to persuade his fellow-citizens that he was a god[62], or at least that he would become a god after death[63]. The story of his complete failures has been reported by Diogenes Laërtius, who might have, however, rationalized some local legends, as he used to.

Heraclides was fascinated both by the iatromantes and by eschatology. He wrote a dialogue *Abaris*, a treatise on catalepsy (*Apnous*), another *On the Things in Hell*[64]. In one of these, he told the stories of famous ecstatics such as Abaris, Aristeas of Proconnesus, Epimenides of Crete, Hermotimus of Clazomenae and Pythagoras[65], and also introduced a new character of his own invention, Empedotimus, whose name was derived from *Empedo*cles and Hermo*timus*[66].

According to some extant fragments of this dialogue, Empedotimus was probably introduced as a fictitious iatromantis, as an ecstatic who had had interesting experiences. His mouth uttered, very probably, what Heraclides himself thought about these matters. Unfortunately, it is impossible to reconstruct the whole from some scattered information preserved by Servius, the *Suda*, Proclus, Philoponus and Olympiodorus.

Carried off by a divine force, Empedocles has had the vision of three gates and three ways in the sky, situated respectively in the signs Scorpio (gate of Hercules, leading to the gods), between Leo and Cancer and between Aquarius and Pisces[67]. The idea of the *three* gates is new in comparison with the *two* gates in the *Republic* of Plato, and different in comparison with the much later theory of Numenius, according to whom there were *two* gates, in the signs Cancer and Capricorn[68]. Varro's satire *Triodítes Tripúlios* might have contained an allusion to the vision of Empedotimus[69].

Proclus was acquainted with another vision: In a desert place, Empedotimus assisted to the sudden appearance of Pluto and Persephone and to the judgement of the dead[70].

Another set of testimonies is related to a possible innovation of Heraclides, with respect to Plato's eschatology. Empedotimus used to call the Milky Way "the way of the souls going through the heavenly Hades"[71]. Furthermore, he held that the Kingdom of Hades contained all things under the sphere of the Sun[72].

From these scarce testimonies, J.D.P. Bolton has inferred that Heraclides was the author of the generalization of the celestial eschatology, i.e., the one who transferred the Platonic Hades from the underworld to the sky[73].

A story ascribed by Proclus to Clearchus of Soli, a contemporary of Heraclides, served as further evidence to support Bolton's assumption about Heraclides's innovation and influence. Clearchus reported that a cataleptic called Cleonymus of Athens experienced the separation of the soul from the body. His soul flew to the sidereal places, from where she contemplated, on the earth below, "places of different forms and colours, and rivers that no mortal man can see". There, she met the soul of a fellow-cataleptic of Syracusa and both of them saw "the souls who were judged and punished and purified one after another, under the supervision of the Erinyes". After that, the two intruders were sent back to the earth, but promised one another that they would try to get in touch and make further acquaintance.

Unfortunately for Bolton's hypothesis[74], there is no trace, in this story, of any innovation with respect to Plato, under Heraclides's influence. At first sight, two of the elements of Clearchus's tale seem incompatible with the idea of an underground Hell: the rivers, which are very probably the rivers in Hades, and the judgement of the souls. However, looking closely at both these details, we can easily ascertain that they belong to the purest Platonic tradition.

According to the Xth Book of the *Republic*, the judgement of the souls takes place somewhere between the "gates of heaven" and the "gates of earth", i.e., in a place *above* the earth. Their reincarnation takes place in the Field of the Middle, which, no matter what it really represents, is also situated somewhere in the sky. After the lots have been cast, the souls are "purified" by alternate heat and cold, until they reach the desert plain of Lethe.

As far as the rivers are concerned, it would be useful to recall that Er cannot see them, because they are in the Tartarus. However, they come out again in the surface of the earth, and that is probably the place that Cleonymus - but no other mortal - could see from above.

Cornelius Labeo reports a very similar story[75]: "duos uno die fuisse defunctos et occurrisse invicem in quodam compito, deinde ad corpora iussos fuisse remeare

et constituisse inter se amicos esse vi(n)cturos, atque ita esse factum donec postea morerentur". Bolton thinks this is simply a summary and continuation of Cleonymus's experience, but P. Mastandrea [76] has a very different idea of the facts. While Bolton translates - correctly, after all - the word *compitum* by "a sort of crossroads"[77], Mastandrea goes much further. The word *compitum* would mean "border between two private properties, where the protective Lares could interact, and where the rites in honour of the deceased who aspired to divinity were celebrated". This would be a good definition of the meaning of this word, if Mastandrea did not infer therefrom a complete different meaning of the whole story. According to this author, the two cataleptics knew each other during their lives. They were neighbours and had a quarrel about properties. They were sent back from heaven to earth, in order to set up an agreement and become friends. Otherwise, they would not have been worthy to return to the sky any more.

This somewhat far-fetched interpretation is based on a fault in the translation of the Latin text. Mastandrea believes that *constituisse* depends on *iussos* (which is gramatically impossible), and reads: "They have been enjoined to get back to their bodies *and* (i.e., "until") to become friends, etc.". In reality, *iussos* and *remeare* form an autonomous syntagm, which depends on *fuisse*, while *constituisse* is simply the verb of the second, coordinated, sentence: *fuisse... et constituisse...* The structure of the whole phrase is very simple, and the meaning of the text cannot be other than: Cornelius Labeo reported that, "one day, two (men) died and met at a sort of crossroads; then, they were enjoined to go back to (their) bodies and decided to become close friends...".

Thus, the two cataleptics did not know one another until their souls met in the other world, coming their different ways to the junction from where, probably, all souls were led to judgement. But their time had not yet come, and therefore a voice told them, as in Clearchus's story, to go back to earth. At that moment, they promised one another to meet again, this time as human, incarnated, beings.

Clearchus is probably the source of Labeo, but neither the former, nor the latter, have anything to do with Heraclides's ideas about the Hades in the sky. These ideas were probably not very consequential, since, with the possible exception of a strange passage in Apuleius, the authors of Late Antiquity quoted them rather as a collection of *curiosa*, than as an influential source. Empedotimus became a iatromantis among others, a strange figure which, apart from its fictitious character, did not exert more attraction and influence than, let us say, Epimenides or Hermotimus.

CHAPTER SIX

THE MYTHS OF PLUTARCH

Neither Heraclides Ponticus, nor Posidonius of Apamea, could claim authorship of the generalization of the celestial eschatology. Nevertheless, this phenomenon existed, and became increasingly important. At the end of the Ist century A.D., when Plutarch wrote his great eschatological myths, the idea of an underground Hades was no more fashionable.

We do not intend to undertake here again the general analysis of Plutarch's myths. With an eye to our previous research[1], we only want to emphasize some elements (the narrative framework, some eschatological ideas, etc.) pertaining to the structure of the myths.

The most striking features of Plutarch's three main eschatological myths[2] are: the constant use of Platonic themes and terms, that undergo Plutarch's sophisticated exegesis; the use of ancient popular materials; the generalization of the celestial eschatology, with a particular emphasis on the role of the moon; the allusions to the mysteries, probably those of Eleusis; and the use of materials deriving from different traditions, which are integrated into his general exegetical system.

The narrative framework of the myth in *De genio Socratis* is formed by the ritual *katabasis* and *incubatio* in the cave of Trophonius at Lebadea, 14 km from Cheronea, on the way to Delphi. This oracle was functioning from the VIth cent. B.C., and Plutarch was acquainted with the local tradition, which he reported in a treatise, now lost[3]. An allusion in *De defectu oraculorum* (431e) would indicate, according to Y. Vernière[4], that Lamprias, the author's brother, was a priest at Lebadea. Plutarch might have known Dicearch's *Eis Trophoniou katabasis*, but the extant fragments of this work do not present any analogy with the myth in *De genio*[5].

The most important evidence about this oracle comes from Pausanias. (Information about abstention from food during the preliminary purifications comes from the comic poet Cratinus[6]).

In his *Guide to Greece*, Pausanias gives the following description of the rite[7]:

"This is what happens at the oracle. When a man decides to go down to Trophonios, he first lives a certain number of days in a building which is consecrated to Good Fortune and the Good Spirit. Living there he purifies himself and uses no hot water; his bath is the river Herkyna. He has abundant meat from the sacrifices, as a man going down to offer sacrifice to Trophonios himself and to his sons, and to Apollo and Kronos and Zeus the King and Hera the Charioteer and the Demeter they call Europa, Trophonios's nurse. At each of these sacrifices a soothsayer comes to observe the entrails of the victim; making his observation, he foretells to the man going down whether Trophonios will receive him kindly and graciously. The entrails of most victims do not reveal Trophonios's mind very clearly, but on the night a man is going down they slaughter a ram at a pit, calling to Agamedes. It makes no

difference that all the earlier sacrifices have given good omens unless the entrails of this ram carry the same meaning. But if they do agree, every man goes down with true hope. He goes down like this. First he is taken at night to the river Herkyna, and there anointed with olive oil and washed by two boys of about thirteen, who have to be children of genuine Lebadeians. They call these boys Hermai: they wash the man who is going down and act as his servants, like slave-boys. From here he is taken by priests, not straight to the oracle, but to the water-springs, which are very close together. Here he must drink the water of Forgetfulness, to forget everything in his mind until then, and then the water of memory, by which he remembers the sights he sees in his descent. He looks at the statue they say Daidalos made, which is never shown by the priests except to men just going to Trophonios; he sees it and worships it and prays, and then goes to the oracle, wearing a linen tunic, which he ties with ribbons, and heavy local boots. (...) Inside the circle is a chasm in the earth, not natural but most carefully constructed with skill and architectural sense. It is shaped like a kiln with a diameter of about ten feet, I would say, and hardly more than twenty feet deep. There is no way down, but when a man is going to Trophonios they bring him a light, narrow, ladder. When you get down you can see an opening between wall and floor about two feet wide and a foot high. The man going down lies on the ground with honey-cakes in his hands and pushes his feet into the opening and then tries to get his knees in. The rest of his body immediately gets dragged after his knees, as if some extraordinarily deep, fast river was catching a man in a current and sucking him down. From here on, inside the second place, people are not always taught the future in one and the same way: one man hears, another sees as well. Those who go down return feet first through the same mouth. They say no one has been killed going down except for one of Demetrios's bodyguard, and they say of him that he observed none of the rites of the sanctuary and went down not to consult the god but in the hope of bringing out gold and silver from the holy place. They say his dead body reappeared elsewhere, it was not thrown up through the sacred mouth. This was the most interesting of the stories I heard about the man. When a man comes up from Trophonios the priests take him over again, and sit him on the throne of Memory, which is not far from the holy place, to ask him what he saw and discovered..."

The two water-springs, Lethe and Mnemosyne, which also figured in the eschatological landscape according to the golden plates of the Magna Graecia[8], the way to get into the cave and out of it, the mortuary honey-cakes, all these point out that the performer of the *incubatio* was treated like a dead person visiting the after world. The whole scene was, as J. Hani has recently shown[9], very archaic. The leading character in Plutarch's "Quest-Apocalypse" was a young man of Cheronea, Timarch, who underwent the whole ritual in order to understand the nature of Socrates's personal genius.

The description of the experience is extremely important, since Timarch's soul finds its way in and out through the skull, the *sutura frontalis*, which plays such a great role both in Indo-Tibetan and in shamanistic traditions[10]. However, if we consider the archaic Greek testimonies concerning the relation between *psyché* and head[11], as well as the emphasis that Plato gives to this connection[12], then we must conclude that the only genuine invention belonging either to Plutarch himself,

or to an ancient, otherwise unknown, tradition, concerns the vivid description of the opening of the *sutura frontalis*. At any rate, it is sensible to suppose that Plutarch relies here on some local evidence, perhaps one of those wooden tablets kept at Lebadea, on which, according to Pausanians, everyone consulting the oracle was obliged to write down the account of his experience. If Plutarch's brother Lamprias was really a priest of the sanctuary, then Plutarch himself might have had easy access to these precious records.

The narrative framework of the *De sera* myth, though not less "shamanistic", is more explicitly Platonic. The apocalypse of Aridaeus-Thespesius of Soli has, as its model, the myth of Er in the *Republic*, an "apocalypse by accident". Aridaeus had led a morally reprehensible life, until he "died" in an accident. However, it was only a catalepsy that lasted three days, until his body was on its way to the burial place. During this time, his soul had travelled and learned very much, so that, when it returned to the body, Aridaeus changed his name in Thespesius and took on very honourable habits.

The name Aridaeus is a corruption of *Ardiaeus*, the tyrant of the myth of Er, condemned to everlasting torture in Hell. *Thespesios*, on the contrary, points out entirely different qualities of the man: "ce mot, qui signifie *divin, merveilleux*, s'applique bien à celui qui par une vraie faveur divine, une 'grâce', a pu 'se convertir'[13]".

In the myth of *De genio*, under the cover of a metaphorical language, Plutarch introduces many astronomical notions, and a theory of three cosmical layers, i.e. junction-points between the "four principles of all things". One of the most remarkable transformations undergone by Plato's eschatology in Plutarch's interpretation, is the transfer of the underground rivers of the Hades to the sky. It is easy to recognize, in the two rivers flowing into the "celestial sea" (590f), the Pyriphlegeton and the Cocytus (*Phaedo* 111d). As far as the Styx is concerned, Timarch obtains the following information from a bodiless Voice: "'What is the Styx?' he asked. 'It is the path to Hades', came the answer, 'it passes across from you here, cleaving the light with its vertex; it extends upward, as you see, from Hades below, and where in its revolution it also touches the world of light, it bounds the last region of all...'[14]". "The turning point of birth is at the moon. For while the rest of the islands belong to gods, the moon belongs to terrestrial daemons and avoids the Styx by passing slightly above it; it is caught, however, once in a hundred and seventy-seven secondary measures[15]. As the Styx draws near the souls cry out in terror, for many slip off and are carried away by Hades; others, whose cessation of birth falls out at the proper moment, swim up from below and are rescued by the Moon, the foul and unclean excepted. These the Moon, with lightning and a terrible roar, forbids the approach, and bewailing their lot they fall away and are borne downwards again to another birth, as you see[16]". In *De facie* (943d), Plutarch resumes the same description: "For many, even as they are in the act of clinging to the moon, she trusts off and sweeps away; and some of those souls too that are on the moon they see turning upside down as if sinking again into the deep." The moon itself is full of depths and hollows: "The largest of them is called 'Hecate's recess', where the souls suffer and exact penalties for whatever they have endured or committed after having already become Spirits; and the two long ones are called 'The Gates', for

through them pass the souls now to the side of the moon that faces heaven and now back to the side that faces earth. The side of the moon towards heaven is named 'Elysian plain', the hither side 'House of counter-terrestrial Phersephone'[17]".

As for the origin of this strange eschatological role assigned to the moon, we have weighed elsewhere the different scholarly opinions. If the Pindaric fragment about the lunar Persephone is indeed, as A. Delatte thinks[18], authentic, then lunar eschatology might not be entirely invented by Plutarch. However, W. Burkert has shown that, even admitting the authenticity of the Pythagorean *acousma* concerning the Sun and the Moon as Isles of the Blessed, this does not mean yet that the Moon is close to the Hades[19].

The somewhat strange description of the Styx, flowing upward from Hades to the Moon, has no parallel in other eschatological representations. However, the IInd cent. B.C. *Book of Daniel* (VIII 10) described a fiery river under the Throne of God, the famous ***nahar hadinnûr***, that later took on great emphasis in the rabbinic speculations. Origenes referred symbolically to Daniel's passage[20], while the Gnostic *Excerpta ex Theodoto* reported by Clement of Alexandria, and belonging to the Oriental Valentinian school[21], came up with a further detail, derived from Jeremiah (XXIII 19) and later on much exploited by the rabbis of the IIIrd century: The fiery river flows into the void of creation, "that is, the Gehenna, and this latter is never filled up with fire"[22]. Plutarch's Styx, it is true, flows upward, but its role is similar to that of the Jewish fiery stream(s). This might perhaps lead to the conclusion that the two representations have something in common.

The myth of Aridaeus-Thespesius contains precious information about the hierarchy of the mysteries in Plutarch's outlook[23]. Apart from the generalization of the celestial eschatology, Plutarch seems to remain faithful to his model, the myth of Er. But Plato's data are constantly interpreted according to a modern, sophisticated, exegetical system. Only one example is enough to illustrate Plutarch's hermeneutical approach. In the *Gorgias* (523d-524e), speaking of the judgement of the dead, Plato states that the souls of the Unrighteous are marked by scars, corresponding to their evil deeds, in order to be easily recognized by the Judge. This motif also occurs in *De sera* (565b), but, besides the scars, the souls have now another distinctive mark, i.e., their colour. Plutarch establishes the following correspondence between colours and vices:

dark and dirty	-	meanness, greed
red	-	cruelty, harshness
green	-	luxury
violet	-	spite, envy

The origin of this doctrine is doubtless astrological. Plutarch might have been acquainted with a pseudo-Hermetic treatise in which both colours and vices related to the planets were described in a certain order. In the *Panaretos*, whose doctrine of the "parts" (*kleroi, sortes*) is explained by Paulus of Alexandria and his disciple Heliodorus, the order of the planetary lots is as follows: Jupiter, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Saturn. The same order occurs in Servius's *Commentary on the Aeneis* (VI 714): "quum descendunt animae trahunt secum torporem Saturni, Martis iracundiam,

Veneris libidinem, Mercurii lucri cupiditatem, Jovis regni desiderium". The analogies between the two series of vices in Plutarch and Servius, together with the fact that the colours described by Plutarch are ascribed by the Hermetic lay-astrology to the very same planets, lead to the conclusion that Plutarch's source has been some work of the Hermetic *vulgata*. For reasons unknown, Plutarch does not mention either the colour, or the vice that were traditionally assigned to the planet Mercury:

PLANET (Servius)	VICE (Servius)	VICE (Plut.)	COLOUR (Plut.)
Saturn	torporem	meanness	dark
Mars	iracundiam	cruelty	red
Venus	libidinem	luxury	green
Mercury	lucri cupiditatem	–	-
Jupiter	regni desiderium	envy	violet

The following chapter will plainly show how influential this astrological theory had become in the IInd century A.D. If our hypothesis is true, then the passage in *De sera* is the most ancient testimony concerning the origin of the "passage of the soul through the planetary spheres".

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE PASSAGE OF THE SOUL THROUGH THE SPHERES

Fifty to eighty years after the eschatological myths of Plutarch were written, the most influential thinkers of the time - Bardaisan of Edessa[1], Basilides and his son Isidorus, Celsus, Julian the Theurgist, son of Julian the Chaldaean, Numenius, etc. - were deeply concerned with the problem of the descent of the soul to the earth and its ascent back to heaven.

According to the astrological lore, the planetary imprint on the embryo at the moment of birth, the individual horoscope of nativity, determined both the physical and moral qualities of the subject, and the future events forming his destiny. An ancient astrological theory, deriving from a divinatory technique, was the theory of the "parts" or "lots" (*partes, loci, sortes*). With a relatively easy computation method, the astrologer could determine the "places" (*loci*) or the "lots" (*sortes*) of every planet within the genethliac apart from their respective positions and aspects therein. According to the pseudo-Hermetic *Panaretos*, the lot of the Sun is the "good genius" (*agathos daimon*), the lot of the Moon is the "good fortune" (*agathe tyche*), that of Jupiter has an influence upon the social position of the subject, that of Mercury is connected with his "natural necessities", that of Venus with his erotic life, that of Mars with courage and risks, that of Saturn with fatality (*nemesis*)[2]. Heliodorus, in his Commentary on the *Elementa apotelesmatica* of Paulus of Alexandria, gives further details on this doctrine: the Moon determines all physical qualities of the subject, the Sun his psychical qualities, Jupiter his fame, Mercury his intelligence and expressive faculties, etc.[3]. Of course, one's genethliac could be partly or entirely bad, by reason of the unfavourable positions and aspects of the malefics (Mars, Saturn) and even of the other planets. In such a case, the subject's body, mind and destiny were compromised, and his qualities turned to vices. On the other hand, the whole doctrine of the inexorable astral influence upon one's destiny had a very unpleasant side indeed: that, no matter how much one might strive for better in life, one could never succeed, unless the mysterious forces of the sky at the moment of one's birth allowed it. The exertion of one's free will was practically impossible. Thus, in its philosophical implications, astrology was intimately connected with any pessimistic view of the human being as such.

Gnosticism used the astrologic pessimism in a very peculiar way. Since the whole cosmos, including the planets, was the abode of the evil, the sevenfold walled prison of the soul, the liberation of the latter consisted in putting off, during her ascension to the *pleroma*, all the vices contracted from the planetary archons. These latter became, thus, hideous representatives of the vices.

Many lists of archons, together with the description of their beast-shapes, names, qualifications and vices, have reached us, from Celsus's time to the IIIrd century A.D.[4]. Irenaeus of Lyon says explicitly that the Ophites "sanctam autem hebdomadem septem stellas, quas dicunt planetas, esse uolunt"[5]. The route through the

planets was opened to the soul by a saviour, knower of the secret watchwords to be uttered before each of the planetary archons. If our interpretation is correct, Celsus reported the descensus incognitus of the Gnostic saviour in the system of the Ophites. This account served as a model for the ascensus of the soul[6].

That the soul, in her descent to the earth, puts on, like a sort of vestures or "appendices", the vices of the seven planets, is a doctrine held by Basilides, a learned Gnostic of IInd century Alexandria. According to him, the transcendent spirit (*pneuma*) of man is temporarily attached to a soul (*psyche*) deriving from the cosmos[7]. The planetary vices attack the soul and become encrusted therein, in the form of concretions or "appendices" (*prosartemata*)[8]. Isidorus, Basilides's son, explained probably a similar theory in his treatise *On the Temporary Soul*[9]. In the IIIrd century Coptic work *Pistis Sophia*, the notion of *antimimon pneuma* corresponds to the planetary concretions that the soul puts on during her descent to the earth[10]. The story of the embodiment (*ensomatosis*) of the Hermetic Primordial Man follows the same pattern: "Cet homme idéal, en vertu d'une chute dont les péripéties varient de mythe à mythe, mais dont le principe est communément l'*érôs*, tombe dans le monde de la matière, c'est-à-dire sur la terre. Au cours de sa chute, l'Homme commence en général (...) par revêtir un corps astral ou pneumatique, véhicule (*óchêma*) du *noûs* (qui ne peut avoir directement contact avec la matière), intermédiaire entre le *noûs* immatériel et les concrétions de plus en plus hyliques qui vont s'attacher à lui; puis, à mesure qu'il traverse les sept sphères (ou, en d'autres mythes, les douze signes zodiacaux), cet Homme-*noûs* revêt, ainsi que des tuniques, les vices des sept planètes (ou des archontes qui y président...), et c'est ainsi souillé qu'il s'incarne enfin dans un corps terrestre et s'unit à la nature matérielle"[11]. The 25th chapter of the Hermetic *Poimandres* describes the ascent of the soul through the spheres of the planets and the gradual severing of the vicious planetary concretions contracted during her descent[12]. The order of the vices corresponds to the Chaldaean planetary order:

PLANET	VICE
(Moon)	Physical growth and decay
(Mercury)	Malicious arts
(Venus)	Lust
(Sun)	Ambition to command
(Mars)	Daring, foolhardiness
(Jupiter)	Wealth
(Saturn)	Lies (= Meanness)

The Neoplatonist Jamblichus was probably acquainted with the Hermetic doctrine of astral fatality (*heimarmene*) and with the almost physical interpretation of fate in terms of planetary concretions upon the soul. He made a distinction between two souls, the first deriving from the Intelligible world, and the second from the "revolution of the celestial bodies"[13].

The Vth century Latin author Servius expounded the same theory, according to different sources, one of which, in all probability, astrological[14]: "Quum descendunt animae trahunt secum torporem Saturni, Martis iracundiam, Veneris libidinem,

Mercurii lucri cupiditatem, Jovis regni desiderium". The planetary order corresponds here to the order of the Hermetic *Panaretos*, and, with one small difference, to an order of Egyptian origin occurring in the *Apotelesmata* of pseudo-Manethon and to a demotic *ostrakon* of the I[st] century A.D.[15]. The vices assigned to the planets are similar to those of the *Poimandres*. In other places[16], Servius exposes a doctrine close to those ascribed by the polemicist Arnobius to his adversaries[17]. In the extant fragments of his *De regressu animae*[18], Porphyry speaks often about contagious *mala mundi* that the soul must put off in her ascent to the Father, but this expression is somewhat vague. It is, however, very likely, that he also knew the whole theory[19].

However, this was only a variant - a negative, pessimistic one - of a doctrine that was not irrevocably bound to the idea that the whole universe, and especially the planets, were evil.

Numenius might have been the representative of the other variant, where effective qualities, necessary for the completion of the bodily and psychical human being born on the earth were ascribed to the planets. As a matter of fact, the testimonies[20] say explicitly only that, according to Numenius and Cronius, the soul descends to earth through the heavenly gate of Cancer, and ascends, after death, to heaven, through the celestial gate of Capricorn.

Macrobius gives a detailed account of the descent of the soul through the planets (in Chaldaean order), from where she takes on the following qualities: reasoning and intelligence from Saturn, impulse to action from Jupiter, the will to fight from Mars, sensitivity from the Sun, desire from Venus, interpretative and expressive faculties from Mercury, and bodily birth and growth from the Moon[21]. Proclus exposes a similar doctrine[22], except for the fact that his subject matter is treated analogically, not empirically (as in Macrobius), and the planetary order he makes use of is the Egyptian, not the Chaldaean. Another testimony of this variant comes from Servius[23]: "Ut dicunt physici, cum nasci coeperimus, sortimur a Sole spiritum, a luna corpus, a Marte sanguinem, a Mercurio ingenium, a Jove honorum desiderium, a Venere cupiditates, a Saturno umorem: quae omnia singulis reddere viderunt extincti". The allusion to *physici* and, above all, the verb *sortior*, seem to indicate that the doctrine referred to derives from an astrological writing.

The table at page 51 shows some of the correspondences and differences between our testimonies. However, if there is any doubt that Proclus was concerned with the same doctrine as Macrobius, some further quotations from the former's works will dissipate it. Proclus integrated the whole scenery of aseensus/descensus in the influential theory of the *ochema* or "vehicle" of the soul, derived from Aristotelic and Stoic speculations about the "spirit" (*pneuma*) as an envelope of the soul. Plotinus and Porphyry did not use the term *ochema* with this meaning. The representatives of the new doctrine were Proclus, Hierocles, Damascius, Simplicius and Priscianus at Athens, Hermeias and Olympiodorus at Alexandria[24]. However, Plotinus and Porphyry believed that the soul, during her descent, took on a "subtle body" from the sky, and put it off during her ascent[25]. Jamblichus, who used the formula *aitheródes kai augoidès óchêma*, made of it a mediumistic organ, but did not connect it with the descent of the soul[26].

Proclus took over both of these earlier, distinct, conceptions of the psychical envelope, and tried to solve the contradictions between them by stating that the

ZONE	MACROBIUS	PROCLUS	SERVIUS (ad XI 51)	SERVIUS (ad VI 714)	POIMANDRES (ch. 25)
SATURN	logistikon, theoretikon, ratiocinantem, intelligentiam	theoretikon	umorem	torporem	*pseudos*
JUPITER	praktikon, vim agendi	politikon	honorum desiderium	regni desiderium	corruption produced by riches
MARS	thymikon, animositas	thymoeides	sanguinem	iracundiam	Daring, foolhardiness
SUN	aisthetikon, phantastikon, sentiendi et opinandi	aisthetikon	spiritum	–	Ambition to command
VENUS	epithymetikon, desiderium	epithymetikon	cupiditates	libidinem	Lust
MERCURY	hermeneutikon, pronuntiandi, interpretandi	phonetikon	ingenium	lucri cupiditatem	Malicious arts
MOON	phytikon, plantandi, augendi	phytikon	corpus	–	Physical growth and decay

soul had actually not one, but *two* "vehicles": a higher one, *sumphues, augoeides* or *astroeides*, which is immaterial, impassible and indestructible, and a lower one, *pneumatikon*, which is temporary, composed of the four elements. The Proposition 209 of his *Elements of Theology* (reported above, p. 12) describes the descent of the soul, envelopped in her *sumphues ochema*, to the earth.

It is time to come back again to the Mithraic *symbolon* according to Celsus[27]. Our testimony reports that it was meant to symbolize "the passage of the soul" (*tês psychês diexódou*) through the celestial bodies".

It is easy to notice that the order of the steps of the ladder, i.e. the inverse order of the days of the planetary week, from Saturn (Saturday) to the Sun (Sunday), is not fit for a journey of the soul, since it does not correspond to any proper arrangement of the planets in the universe. That is why R. Turcan rejected Celsus's explanation and came up with a very enticing interpretation: "L'âme n'est donc purifiée et ne réintègre le séjour des Bienheureux - le 'lieu supracéleste' du *Phèdre* - qu'après une série de réincarnations qui coïncident chronologiquement avec un nombre déterminé de révolutions sidérales, celles mêmes dont le 'symbole' était proposé à la méditation des mystes mithriaques... Ce que signifiait... le 'symbole' mithriaque, c'était la rénovation intégrale du monde et corrélativement des âmes, l'apocatastase au terme de la Grande Année sidérale: l'univers revivrait alors son premier printemps"[28].

Whence does the scholar infer such a sophisticated explanation of the *symbolon*? R. Turcan believes that a number of testimonies[29] would refer to a strange and unique doctrine, according to which the Great Year or cosmic year would coincide not only with the return of the planets to their positions in the *thema mundi*, the genethliac of the whole universe, but also with a mysterious period of achievement of the destiny of all individual souls scattered in the world. In other words, the Great Year would represent not only a sidereal, but also a metensomatical period.

However, not one of the testimonies adduced by R. Turcan in support of his thesis seems to hint at such an ingenious theory. For instance, Macrobius, who says that *constat enim numerorum certam constitutamque rationem animas sociare*[30], is simply alluding to the "revolutions of the soul" in the *Timaeus* (44e, 47d, etc.) which follow the same numerical proportions as the two revolutions of the universal soul (*Tim.* 34d ff).

Celsus ascribed to the Christians the idea of astronomical periods ending up in a cataclysm, which was an obviously wrong interpretation of the Christian *ekpyrosis*[31]. This view of Celsus was current and could also be found in Calcidius's *Commentary on the Timaeus*[32]. Neither Celsus, nor Calcidius, gave credit to this belief[33]. On the contrary, both of them were in complete agreement with another theory, i.e., the eternal return of things and events, according to cosmic periods[34]. But this was an interpretation of the passage in the *Timaeus* (39d2-7) where the doctrine of the Great Year was expounded, and actually had something to do with metensomatosis, but only in so far as the changing of the whole astronomical period involved a return to the earth of the same people (e.g., Socrates), with the same destiny (e.g., Socrates's sentence and death). In a further passage, Celsus explained the reasons why the soul must be incarnated and cited, among those, the "economy of the universe"[35]. But

this again is a simple allusion to Plato's *Phaedrus* (248e-249e) and to the "necessity" by which the souls must be installed in their bodies (*Tim.* 40a ff). Thus, it is safe to state that neither Celsus, nor Calcidius and Macrobius were acquainted with the seductive theory ascribed to them.

What about Porphyry, then? Porphyry simply alludes to a passage of Plato's *Politicus*[36], where there is a positive link between metensomatosis and universal cycles, and also between the latter and periodical cataclysms. But, so far as we know, none of the above-mentioned authors of Late Antiquity, Porphyry included, speculates further on this Platonic theory.

There are, however, other testimonies than those quoted by R. Turcan, that seem to point out indeed that the *chronological* interpretation of the *symbolon* is not unreliable. In chapter 52 of the *Ethiopic Book of Henoch*, the seer arrives before seven mountains: "A mountain of iron, and a mountain of copper, and a mountain of silver, and a mountain of gold, and a mountain of soft metal, and a mountain of lead"[37]. W. Bousset[38] believes that the seven mountains would symbolize seven universal empires that will melt before the coming Messiah as wax before the fire. Unfortunately, there is no further hint whatsoever at a chronological order of the seven periods. Only a doctrine reported by Servius and ascribed by him to the Sibyl of Cumae, establishes a relation between wordly periods, metals and planets[39]. This might, however, be evidence that this sort of speculation really existed, and that Celsus was acquainted with it.

There is, obviously, one further problem related to all this: to what extent were Celsus's interpretations connected with the mysteries of Mithra? M.J. Vermaseren pointed out the relative simplicity of the mithraic symbolism, in comparison with Celsus's and Porphyry's sophisticated theories[40]. The only positive thing we know, is that astrological computations, sometimes complicated enough, were involved both in Mithra's own mythology[41], and in the building of the mithrea[42]. This would seem to give room to the hypothesis that the hierarchies of the mysteries of Mithra were not against intellectual speculations. However, this is no proof either that the sevenfold ladder was a real Mithraic object, or that Celsus's interpretation of it was correct.

During Late Antiquity, another influential doctrine was that of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, written down by Julian the Theurgist, son of Julian the Chaldaean, in the second half of the IInd century A.D.

An extant fragment of the *Oracles* speaks figuratively about the seven planets[43]: "Do not bend downward: a precipice lies under the earth, pulling (the soul) far away from the threshold with a sevenfold way". H. Lewy, who translates by "sevenfold ladder" the last expression of this fragment (*heptaporou bathmidos*), gives the following explanation of the whole passage: "The term 'precipice' is a Chaldaean metonymic designation of Tartarus. The 'sevenfold ladder' signifies the seven planetary spheres, which the soul of the initiate must climb up halfway in its 'elevation' toward the Empyrean. The 'downward inclination' expresses in the vocabulary of the Platonists imitated by the Chaldeans the action of turning towards the material world, away from the noetic goal"[44]. Michael Psellus, in his *Exegesis*, adds one further detail: "When the soul has bent downward, she is brought to the earth through these seven

spheres"[45]. That seems to hint at a possible passage through the planetary spheres. Eusebius, in his *Praeparatio euangelica*[46], cites an "Apollo-oracle", according to which "there is only one cosmic revolution, divided into seven zones by the marches of the stars, which the Chaldaeans and the Hebrews have called the way of seven".

According to H. Lewy, all this is not sufficient evidence to hold that the *Oracles* have been acquainted with the doctrine of the descent of the soul through the spheres. However, if we mentioned here the *Chaldaean Oracles*, this was for another purpose.

The Christian heresiologist Arnobius, who wrote his *Adversus gentes* at the beginning of the IVth century A.D., led a vivid polemic against adversaries called *uiri noui*, who might be the same so-called "Gnostics" fought by Plotinus. These were, in all probability, some single members of Plotinus's own school, who had undergone the influence of the Valentinian Gnosticism[47]. We have shown elsewhere[48] that their doctrine was possibly that of the *Oracles*, apart from one difference which might be less significant than H. Lewy would have admitted. Arnobius does not speak here of any planetary journey, but ascribes to the Magi the possession of some propitiatory prayers (*commendaticias preces*) that have the faculty to appease some celestial "Powers", thus permitting their disciples to find "easy ways to fly to the sky" (II 62b; cf. II 13). In another place, this flight is preceded by a somewhat strange operation, namely the growth of wings: "Cum primum soluti membrorum abieretis e nodis, alas vobis adfuturas putatis, quibus ad caelum pergere atque ad sidera uolare possitis" (II 33). According to another testimony[49], the Magi owned talismans (*sphragidas*) with divine names upon them, i.e. the "seals" or badges that had to be shown to the heavenly watchers. As far as the wings are concerned, the interpretation that has been given them is too literal: the sorcerers "prétendaient de munir d'ailes leurs dupes, lorsqu'elles se libéraient de leurs corps, afin de permettre de voler aux cieux"[50]. In reality, the "sorcerers" were probably not as devious as that. The metaphor of the "wings of the soul" is derived from Plato's *Phaedrus* (249d-250c). A long hermeneutical tradition had dealt with it, before it came up again in the works of the "Gnostics" against whom Plotinus's polemic was directed[51]. For Plotinus's adversaries, the "loss of the wings" signified the sin of the universal soul. For Plotinus himself, the metaphor could not mean anything but the fall of the individual soul into the worldly existence[52]. Arnobius's "sorcerers" did not share any of these convictions. The *Chaldaean Oracles* give us again a clue to understand their doctrine. As a matter of fact, an extant fragment[53] speaks of the dissolution of the mortal body (responding to Arnobius's *soluti e nodis membrorum*) and of the ascent to Olympus, "raised by the light wings of the soul".

In conclusion, we might assume that Arnobius's polemic, so far as the ascension of the soul was concerned, was directed, in all probability, against followers of the doctrine of the *Chaldaean Oracles*[54].

CHAPTER EIGHT

FROM THE JEWISH APOCALYPSES TO THE MI'RAJ

The heavenly journey belongs to a constant pattern of Jewish and Jewish-Christian apocalypses, from *1 Henoch*, whose oldest parts, according to J.T. Millik[1], precede the *Book of Daniel*. The voyage through a number of heavens (7 or 3) becomes a common place of the Jewish apocalyptic, from the *Testament of the XII Patriarchs*[2]. The number seven (heavens, palaces) prevails in the so-called "mysticism of the MRKBH" (merkābhâ) or chariot carrying God's Throne in the I[st] chapter of Ezekiel. The materials pertaining to this trend of Jewish mysticism are included in the notes of the *Tosephta*[3], in the *Slavic Book of Henoch* (I[st] century A.D.), in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* (I[st]-II[nd] cent. A.D.) and, between the III[rd] and the VI[th] centuries, in the so-called "hekhalotic literature" (from HYKL, *hêkhāl*, "temple, palace")[4].

The M[c]ŚH MRKBH or "work of the chariot", a mystical speculation on the I[st] chapter of Ezekiel, goes back to the Pharisees of the Second Temple[5]. Later on, this "Jewish gnosis"[6] goes around under the names of the great masters Yohannan b. Zakkay, Eliezer b. Hirkanos, Aqiba b. Joseph and Yishmael the High Priest.

According to J. Maier, this "hekhalotic literature" was preceded by a long tradition of speculations upon the Temple (*hekhal*) of Jerusalem, starting with *1 Henoch* (14, 11-19)[7]. The ecstatic had the heavenly vision of the Temple, whose elements corresponded to those of the Temple of Jerusalem, but took on, at the same time, grandiose and formidable visionary features. The same explanation is relevant for the story of the four who entered the PRDS (b. Azzay, b. Zoma, Acher and R. Aqiba)[8].

The *Slavic Book of Henoch* or *2 Henoch* is a good Jewish example of a journey through the seven heavens. "The book is cast in the form of a vision of Enoch, in which he is conducted by two angels through the seven heavens, and shown all they contain. In the first heaven he sees the angels who guard the snow and ice, and the dew. In the second are the fallen angels, suffering torment and awaiting their final doom. In the third heaven he sees the Paradise of the righteous, and also the place of torment for the wicked. In the fourth heaven are the sun, moon and stars, and the angels who attend them. In the fifth heaven are the Watchers, with their chief, Satan. These watchers are the angels whose revolt against God preceded the sin of their followers with mortal women, and so they are separated from their followers, who figured in the second heaven. In the sixth heaven are the angels who are charged with the regulation of all the forces of Nature. In the seventh heaven is God Himself, with the archangels and all the celestial glory of His court"[9]. The *Greek Apocalypse of Baruch* (*3 Baruch*) also expresses belief in seven heavens. "The seer is taken through five of these heavens (only two are mentioned in the Slavonic version) where he is shown the mysteries of God"[10]. In the "hekhalotic literature", the seer goes through seven *hekhaloth*, up to the Throne of God[11]. In other works belonging to the same apocalyptic trend, the number of heavens is sometimes

multiplied almost *ad libitum*, as in the *Hebrew Book of Henoch* (*3 Henoch*), where God sits on His Throne beyond 955 heavens, according to the numerical value of the Hebrew word HŠMYM ("heaven"), in which the final M=600. Later on, the number of skies is brought down to 290, according to the common value of the word ŠMYM.

An important feature of all these apocalypses is the absence of any relation between the seven skies and the seven planets. This is also valid for the Jewish medieval writing whose English translation has been published by M. Gaster under the title of *Revelation of Moses*[12], in which the heavens are, however, connected with the days of the week.

The Arabic traditions concerning the "nightly journey" (isra') and the mi'raj or "heavenly ascension" of the Prophet Mohammed are directly derived from the Jewish apocalyptic.

According to Tor Andrae, the most ancient evidence about the revelation of Mohammed is an account by Ibn Ishaq (*ob.* 768)[13].

The cycle of the isra' is composed by six hadits, going back to the IXth century. They can further be ranged in two different classes[14]. The first class contains the traditions reported by the IXth century author Sa'id ibn Mansur[15], while the second contains four hadits reported by Bukhari and Muslim (IXth century), Daraqutni (XIth century), Ibn Hanbal (IXth century) and Ibn 'Asakir (XIIth century)[16]. In the tradition of the isra', Mohammed is not supposed to perform any heavenly journey.

The mi'raj cycle is not less ancient than that of the isra'. It has three main variants (A, B, C): Bukhari and Muslim (A), Ishaq b. Wahb (IXth century; the variant B is ascribed to Ibn 'Abbas, fellow of the Prophet), and an aprocryphal variant (C), forged either by the Persian Maysara b. 'Abd Rabbi-hi (VIIIth cent.) or by 'Umar ibn Sulayman (Damascus, VIIIth century).

In all the versions of the mi'raj, the ascension through seven heavens (which are not, as M. Asín Palacios assumes, the planetary skies) plays a more or less important role. In every heaven, the archangel Gabriel introduces to Mohammed either one (or two) prophets (version A), or a particular (class of) angel(s) (vers. B and C). The longest version is the apocryphal one (C).

In the *Tafsir* or Tabari (IXth century), the tradition of the mi'raj (A) merges with those of the isra'.

The Islamic legends entered Christian Spain as early as the IXth century[17]. The first version of the mi'raj summarized in Latin (A, B) was drawn by the archbishop of Toledo, Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada (1170-1247) from the *Sahih* or collection of authentic hadits by Bukhari and Muslim. The summary forms a part of the fifth chapter (*De sublimatione Mahometi in regem et de jussionibus mendaciter excogitatis*) of Rodrigo's *Historia arabum*. Other ancient traditions included in the isra', e.g. the "shamanistic" episode of the "opening of the breast" of the Prophet, were included in the *Collectio Toletana*, a collection of Latin translations from Arab, ordered by Peter the Venerable, abbot of Cluny (1092-1156), after his journey to Spain in 1141.

A longer version of the mi'raj was translated into Castilian in 1264, by Abraham *alfaqim*, on the order of the king Alphonse Xth "the Learned". The notary Bona-

ventura of Siena performed the Latin translation (*Liber Scale*) from Castilian. For a long time, the translation from Latin into French (*Livre de l'Eschiele Mahomet*) was regarded as the work of the same Italian scholar, until P. Wunderli showed that it probably belonged to an "unknown Provençal" working on the orders of Bonaventura. For this same reason, the translator did not change the name of Bonaventura in the Prologue, where his master figured as a translator from Castilian into Latin[18]. In 1949, E. Cerulli published in parallel the Latin and French texts of the *Liber Scale*[19], which follow the apocryphal (C) version of the mi'raj.

Besides the version summarized by Rodrigo Jimènez de Rada and the *Liber Scale* itself, a third Latin account of the heavenly ascension is included by the jurist (*faqih*) Juan Andrés de Jávita (converted in 1487 to the Christian faith), in his *Confusion de la secta mahomética* (Valencia, 1515)[20].

The analogies between the mi'raj and the Jewish pattern of ascension to heaven are so obvious, that it would seem quite superfluous to demonstrate that the former is derived from the latter[21]. However, G. Widengren[22] believes that the remote origin of the mi'raj, as well as that of the Jewish apocalyptic, is to be sought in Iran. In the light of modern scholarship concerning the apocalyptics genre, this hypothesis seems quite unlikely. The Arabic legends are directly dependent on the Jewish tradition, but the imagination of the Arab writers has contributed in such a measure to their alteration, that they might be considered as an authentic product of Islam.

Anyhow, apocalypses are not at all the speciality of the Iranian religion, with the exception of the VIth century pahlavi writing *Ardā Virāz Nāmak*. At that time, the Greek, Roman, Jewish, and Jewish-Christian apocalyptical traditions were overwhelming. On the contrary, the recent Avesta and the pahlavi writings of the IXth century A.D. are concerned with eschatology, not with ecstatic revelations. The journey of Ardā Virāz, though authentically Iranian, is not the rule, but the exception which confirms it. Neither its narrative framework, nor its content, have anything to do with the mi'raj of Mohammed[23].

CHAPTER NINE

PROBLEMS CONCERNING THE MEDIEVAL APOCALYPSES

The problems concerning the origin, the dating and the derivation of the Christian medieval apocalypses are no less puzzling and controversial than those concerning the mi'raj. The completely wrong outlook of the "religionsgeschichtliche Schule" has put on this topic an indelible imprint.

From Asín Palacios to P. Dinzelbacher, most of the scholars were convinced that the mi'raj took over some Iranian motifs. Strangely enough, the mi'raj legends were supposed to have travelled first to Ireland, where they would have "reactivated" an "autochthonous hotbed of folk-traditions" going back to the Celts. From Ireland, the apocalypses spread, during the XIIth century, over all Europe[1].

Such a complicated scheme might perhaps be applied to the legends of Saint Brandane[2], but not to the apocalyptic writings like the Latin *Visio Beati Esdrae* (Xth-XIth century), the *Visio Alberici Cassinensis* (1127), the *Visio Tundali* (1148), the *Visio Pauli*[3] or the *Tractatus de Purgatorio Sancti Patricii* (1188-89).

The analysis of one motif - the "narrow bridge" - in different traditions and in scholarly literature, will permit the establishment of a completely new chronology and derivation of the medieval apocalypses.

According to the common scholarly view, the mi'raj legends contributed to the apocalyptic wave that, from Ireland, spread during the XIIth century over all Europe. For the sake of maintaining this absurd pattern, P. Dinzelbacher[4] did not hesitate to affirm that the *Visio Alberici*, whose final version was written at Montecassino in 1127[5], depends on the *Visio Tundali* or *Tnugdali*, written down by the Irish friar Marc of Munster at the request of the abbess of the convent of St. Paul in Regensburg (1148). The same Dinzelbacher once claimed that even the Latin *Visio Esdrae* depended on the *Visio Tundali*[6], since he was acquainted with only one XIIth century manuscript of the former, published by A. Mussafia in 1871[7], and visibly ignored the existence of a Xth-XIth cent. manuscript[8], which obviously would have shaken down all these artificial hypotheses. In a more recent article, Dinzelbacher came however to the conclusion that the *Visio Alberici* must depend on the *Visio Esdrae*[9], which is possible if we look at the chronologies, but not necessarily true if we take into account the particular situation of the cloisters of Montecassino at the time of Constantine the African (*ob.* 1087).

A close examination of our testimonies shows that the *Visio Esdrae*, the *Visio Alberici* and possibly the *Tractatus de Purgatorio* belong to a different group from the *Visio Tundali*. Here is the description of the narrow bridge in the XIIth century manuscript of the *Visio Esdrae*[10]: "Et ambulavit amplius et vidit flumen igneum et pontem super magnum. Et venerunt iusti et transierunt cum laetitia et exsultatione. Et venerunt peccatores, et pons iste revertebatur in subtilitatem ut filum staminis. Et cadebant in hoc flumen confitentes peccata sua..."

The vision that the monk Alberic of Settefrati (Cosenza, Calabria) had at the age

of ten (after 1111), during a nine-day catalepsy[11], is very similar to that reported above. An episode in Chrétien's *Lancelot* (c. 1177)[12] and the vision of the knight Owein in St. Patrick's well at the Lough Derg in Ulster (Ireland), reported by the Cistercian monk H. of Saltrey in 1188-89[13] are different from those mentioned above, in so far as the hero himself has to cross the "sword-bridge" (Lancelot) or the "narrow bridge" (Owein).

The 'narrow bridge" occurs in only one Irish testimony, the XIth century *Vision of Adhamhnán,* which, however, does not rely on a "Celtic tradition" at all, but on the Christian tradition previously mentioned. "A huge bridge is across the glen; it reaches from one side to the other, high in the middle but low at each end. Three parties are attempting to go over it, and not all get across. One party, for them the bridge is wide from beginning to end, so that they cross it unhurt, without fear and without terror, over the fiery glen. Another party, however, as they approach it, it is narrow for them at first but wide at last, so that they cross in this way over that same glen after great peril. But the last party, for them the bridge is wide at first but narrow and strait at last, so that they fall from its midst into that same perilous glen, into the gullets of those eight fiery monsters which make their dwelling in the glen"[14]. One would expect that the *Vision of Tundal* resembles this kind of story. This is not the case, since Tundal does not have to cross a "narrow bridge", but simply a bridge full of nails across a fiery pool full of terrible monsters[15]. Was this a "Celtic tradition" at all?

A bridge might casually occur in Celtic testimonies, but it never resembles our "narrow bridge". Thus, for instance, in the *Voyage of Mael Dúin* (VIIIth-IXth centuries): "A little while after that they saw an island with a fortress in it, and a bridge of glass at its door. As often as they tried to go up on the bridge they would fall back down again"[16]. In the earliest of the *Mabinogi, Culhwch and Olwen*, the most striking feature of the bridge is not its narrowness, but the fact that it is the knife of a giant: "Osla Cyllellfawr Great-Knife, who used to carry the short and wide Bronnllafn; when Arthur and his men would come to the edge of a river, they would seek a narrow crossing over the water, and the knife in its sheath would be placed over the water; that would be bridge enough for all the armies of the three isles of Britain..."[17]. It is easy to come to the conclusion that the Celts had invented all sorts of strange bridges, but never a "narrow bridge".

On the contrary, the "bridge of Judgement" or *sirat* performs, in the Arabic legends of the mi'raj, the same function, and has the same characteristics, as the "narrow bridge" in Christian medieval apocalypses: it becomes wide to let the righteous cross, and narrow as a razor blade to fling the unrighteous off into the deep precipice. This motif already occurs in the VIIIth century, in the hadits of Abu Sa'id al-Khudri, one of the companions of the Prophet[18]. In the Latin version of the mi'raj translated by Bonaventura of Siena, the episode reads as follows: "Scias, Machomete, quod Azirat est pons quidam, quem Deus fecit ad probandum illos qui bene credunt in legem tuam et similiter qui non credunt. Pons autem iste in alto supra infernum situs existens, magis subtilis est quam ullus capillus capitis et quam ensis accumen eciam plus accutus. Nam ex utroque parte totus plenus est tenaliis atque unchis et aliis instrumentis ferreis ad perforandum aptis, que omnia longiora sunt magnis lanceis et ita eciam ad incidendum acuta quod a nemine dici potest"[19].

Where does the Arabic *sirat* come from? According to common scholarly opinion, it has been borrowed from the Iranians. The bridge Cinvat, the *cinvatoperetu*, occurs in the most ancient parts of the Avesta (*Yasna* 51,13) and also in the so-called "recent Avesta" (*Videvdat* 19,29). In the former, the word *peretu* could simply have meant "way", and not narrow at all[20], while in the latter, besides not being narrow, it performs no active function in the judgement of the soul[21]. The motif of the "narrow bridge", superimposed on the older, and authentically Iranian, Cinvat, does not occur in Persia before the VIth century A.D. In the pahlavi writings of the IXth century, the Cinvad-bridge closely resembles the *sirat*[22], but there is no decisive evidence that the latter derives from the former.

It is true, the legends of the mi'raj might have, in theory, undergone the influence of religious motifs forged in Iran during the reign of the last Sassanids. But our evidence has shown that the unique source of the mi'raj has been the Jewish and Jewish-Christian apocalyptic. *If the motif of the "narrow bridge" already occurred in the latter, then it would be superfluous to look for its Iranian origin.*

A narrow *door* and a narrow *path* figure in the apocalypse of Esra or *4 Esra*, a Ist or early IInd century writing, whose original language was Hebrew or Aramaic. The extant versions are translations into Latin, Syriac, Ethiopic, Arab, Armenian, Sahidic and Georgian from a previous Greek (now lost) translation from the original[23]. The Latin version of the episode reads as follows: "Civitas est aedificata et posita in loco campestri, est autem plena omnium bonorum; introitus autem eius angustus et in praecipiti positus, ut esset a dextris quidem ignis, a sinistris vero aqua alta; semita autem est una sola inter eos posita, hoc est ignis et aqua, ut non capiat semita illa nisi solummodo vestigium hominis"[24].

Between the IInd and the VIth century, this belief underwent a change: the narrow path has become a narrow bridge. It is difficult to admit that this change was due to an Iranian influence, for the reason that, at that time, the Cinvat-bridge was not yet the "narrow bridge" of the pahlavi traditions!

In his *Historia Francorum*, written before 577, Gregory of Tours gave the following description of the vision of the Abbot Sunniulfus of Randan (Dept. Puy-de-Dôme, France): "Referre erat solitus, ductum se per visum ad quoddam flumen igneum, in quo ab una parte litoris concurrentes populi ceu apes ad alvearia mergebantur; et erant alii usque ad cingulum, alii vero usque ascellas, nonnulli super mentum, clamantes cum fletu se vehementer aduri. Erat enim et pons super fluvium positus ita angustus, ut vix unius vestigii latitudinem recipere possit. Apparebat autem et in alia parte litoris domus magna, extrinsecus dealbata... De hoc ponte praecipitabitur, qui ad disstringendum commissum gregem fuerit repertus ignavus; qui vero strenuus fuerit, sine periculo transit et inducitur laetus in domum"[25]. A very similar bridge occurs also in the *Dialogi de vita et miraculis patrum Italicorum* of Gregory the Great (580-604)[26]. In Judaism, this motif occurs only once, in the *Midrash Yalqut in Is. 60*, but I. Sheftelowitz claims that it precedes the Islamic sirat[27]. This hypothesis relies on very questionable evidence, i.e. the sevenfold partition of the ways in *4 Esra*[28], which corresponds to the seven parts of the bridge *sirat* in the mi'raj legends. The Jewish scholar did not pay much attention to the fact that the seven parts of the bridge correspond more closely to the Arabic tradition of the "seven lands". These seven infernal lands, according to the VIIth

century Jewish convert Ka'b al-Akbar and to the VIIIth century writer Wahb ibn Munabbih, were already mentioned by Ibn 'Abbas, the companion of the Prophet. E. Cerulli has shown that, during the Xth-XIth centuries, two versions of this tradition were in circulation: the first one was contained in the *Qisas al-anbiya* (*Vita Prophetarum*) of Kisa'i (Xth century) and in the *Nuzhat al-mustamti 'in wa-rawdat al-ha'ifin* of Abu 'Omar Yusuf b. Abd ibn 'Abdalbarr (*ob.* 1071), and the second one in the *Qisas al-anbiya* of at-Ta'labi (*ob.* 1035)[29]. Asín Palacios, however, cites two other traditions of the VIIIth century, where the lands receive different names[30]. J.L. Palache, who reports yet another tradition from Azraki, affirms that no similar motif would occur in Judaism[31]. This could hardly be true, since the seven infernal lands (corresponding, this time, to the seven heavens) are described in a medieval midrash, the *Midrash Konen*[32]. Furthermore, there are also very precise similarities between some of the names of the lands in the Arab and in the Jewish testimonies[33]. In a recent, decisive contribution to the subject, Ithamar Gruenwald has shown that the seven sub-terrestrial earths occur in Judaism as early as the IVth or Vth cent. A.D., in the mystical midrash *Re'uyot Yehezkel* (The Visions of Ezekiel)[34].

Our brief survey would still not be conclusive, if O. Wahl had not recently published the earliest version of the *Vita Beati Esdrae*, from a Latin manuscript of the XIth or even Xth century. The description of the "narrow bridge" coincides almost perfectly with the XIIth century text reported above[35]. Thus, the whole scholarly scheme concerning the genesis and derivation of this motif falls short of consistency: the *Vita Beati Esdrae* was written long before the supposed migration of Arabic motifs through Ireland! No forcing of the chronologies will be necessary any more: such a migration only existed in the inventive minds of the XIXth century scholars, who transmitted their ideas to their fellows of the XXth century. The sense of tradition can scarcely be less strong in modern Europe than in VIIIth century Islam, if such a legend, although deprived of any real base, still survived the present time.

The *Visio Beati Esdrae* does not depend at all on the mi'raj. It is based on the Greek translation of *4 Esra*. Translation might not be the proper term in this case; like the Greek apocalypse of Baruch, the Greek adaptation of the IInd century might have been completely different from *4 Esra*. In it, the "narrow path" became a "narrow bridge", as in the Latin *Visio*. In all probability, Gregory of Tours and Gregory the Great were acquainted with a writing closely resembling the Latin *Visio*, perhaps the *Visio* itself. This early Christian tradition is at the origin of the pahlavi Cinvad and of the Arabic *sirat*.

The situation of the *Visio Alberici* might, however, be very different.

The city of Salerno in South Italy was famous for its school of medicine, which flourished there from the IXth century. One of the most influential authors belonging to this school, who also happened to be *the first of the Western translators from Arab into Latin*, was Constantinus Africanus (1020-1087). His biography deserves to be quoted here at full length: "The story of Constantine the African who lived in the world of adventure and learning associated with the great religious movement of the tenth century, is one of the most fertile sources of romantic material which has up to quite recent times been locked within the pages of ancient mss. Born at Carthage, he returned to his native city after many years of travel, the greater

portion of which were in a status of slave; but being armed with the knowledge of the sciences of the Greeks, Babylonians, and Indians, he acquired a degree of learning far in advance of his own countrymen in Carthage, and was accordingly, as was the wont throughout the world in those days, suspected of sorcery and had to flee.

Making his way to Europe about the middle of the eleventh century, he obtained service as secretary to Robert Guiscard, the Norman Ruler of the Two Sicilies, because of his extensive knowledge of language, among which were Arabic and Latin. The court life was not congenial to Constantine, and he retired to the cloisters of Montecassino in 1070, where he spent the remainder of his life rendering into Latin the scientific writings of the learned world of the tenth century"[36].

We know that Alberic of Settefrati became a monk at Montecassino at the time of the abbot Girardo (1111-1123). In 1127 he received from the abbot Senioretto the task of writing down a new version of the vision he had had at the age of ten, shortly before he entered the religious life. In 1127, there were two versions of the boy's story, both of them unreliable. At that time, Alberic must have been about 20 to 26 years old. At any rate, his young friend Petrus Diaconus (1107-1160) *is explicitly said to have helped him in his enterprise*. In the history of medicine, the same Petrus Diaconus of Montecassino is known for having made a tabulation of the works of Constantinus Africanus[37]. Born in 1107, he could not have known Constantine, who died there in 1087. But he was well acquainted with his Latin translations and, very probably, with the oral tradition that the African had left behind him in the cloisters. From D. Campbell we learn that "Constantine was steeped in Arabic culture"[38]. He probably knew very well the legend of the mi'raj, which he did not fail to transmit to someone in the cloisters. Petrus Diaconus, who might have met many of those who had known Constantine, was impressed by the episode of the "narrow bridge". He might have urged on his friend Alberic to insert it in the story of his vision. On the other hand, the young man Alberic might have forgotten much of that famous vision of his early teens. He also might have been sincerely persuaded that he had dreamt of a narrow bridge. At any rate, in the case of the *Visio Alberici*, it is possible to recognize a historical opportunity for an encounter between East and West. With Constantine the African, the Christian story of the "narrow bridge" came back, this time under the disguise of the Arabic *sirat*, to a Christian medieval cloister.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1 J.J. Collins, *Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre*, in J.J. Collins (Ed.), *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre* (SEMEIA: An Experimental Journal for Biblical Criticism 14/1979), Missoula (Montana) 1979, 9.
2 *Ibid.*, 13-15.
3 The kinds of eschatological information to which admittance is given by means of an otherworldly journey are not always as distinct as in Collins's classification.
4 IInd century B.C.
5 Ist century A.D.
6 IInd century A.D.
7 IIIrd century A.D.
8 IVth century A.D.
9 VIIIth-Xth cent. A.D.
10 Xth-XIth cent. A.D.
11 613e-621d.
12 563b-568f.
13 Cf. F. Bar, *Les routes de l'autre monde. Descentes aux Enfers et voyages dans l'au-delà*, Paris 1946, 104-5.
14 Cf. *L'Autre monde au Moyen Age. Voyages et visions*. La Navigation de Saint Brendan. Le Purgatoire de Saint Patrice. La vision d'Albéric. Trois récits traduits par J. Marchand, Paris 1940, XVI.
15 Cf. F. Bar, *op. cit.*, 106. The *Visio Tundali* has been written shortly *before* 1149.
16 Cf. *Paralipomena Jeremiae* (*3 Baruch*) III 3-5, in J.R. Harris, *The Rest of the Words of Baruch*, in "*Haverford College Studies*" 2(1889); P. Bogaert, *L'Apocalypse syriaque de Baruch*, Paris 1969, vol. I, 182ff. Jeremiah sent Abimelech to gather figs in Agrippa's vineyard. Stricken by the heat of the sun, Abimelech went to rest and slept on soundly under a tree for no less than 66 years.
17 Cf. our article *Iatroi kai manteis. Sulle strutture dell'estatismo greco*, in "*Studi Storico-Religiosi*" (Rome) IV (1980) 2, 287-303, and ch. V below.
18 Cf. my article *Inter lunam terrasque. Incubazione, catalessi ed estasi in Plutarco*, in G. Piccaluga (Ed.), *Perennitas. Studi in memoria di Angelo Brelich*, Rome 1980, 149-72; *Iter in silvis*, 53-76.
19 Cf. F. Bar, 93.
20 Cf. R.C. Zaehner, *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism*, Oxford 1961, ch. VIII.
21 I. Scheftelowitz, *Die altpersische Religion und das Judentum. Unterschiede, Übereinstimmungen und gegenseitige Beeinflussungen*, Giessen 1920, 161. The episode referred to is in *4 Esra* XIV 39 ff.
22 Cf. chapter V *infra*.
23 Cf. my article *Magia spirituale e magia demonica nel Rinascimento*, in "*Rivista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa*" (Torino) XVII (1981), 3, 360-408.
24 Cf. M.J. Harner (Ed.), *Hallucinogens and Shamanism*, London-Oxford-New York 1973, passim.
25 Cf. our article cit. *supra*, n. 17. Freedom of the soul in a hungry body is widely attested in Jewish testimonies: cf. Scheftelowitz, *op. cit.*, 159.
26 G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, New York 1954, ch. II 2.
27 Cf. also I. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, Leiden-Köln 1980, 98ff. Against Scholem, Gruenwald holds the view that Merkavah mysticism is not a form of "Gnosticism", but a Jewish branch of theurgy (*ib.*, 110). About the status of dreams in the Homeric epos, see Kessels, *Studies on the Dream in Greek literature*, Utrecht 1973.
28 *Err. prof. rel.*, 24.
29 Epiphanius, *Panarion* XL 2,2.
30 Cf. R.H. Charles (Ed.), *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (reprint), Oxford 1964, vol. II, 123-154.

31 *Asc.Is.* X 12-13, 194 Tisserant.
32 *Ibid.*, X 17-28, 197-9 Tisserant.
33 Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* I 30, 12.
34 Hippolyt., *Refutatio* V 10, 2.
35 *Trimorphic Protennoia* (Cod. XIII 1). Introduced and Translated by J.D. Turner, in J.M. Robinson (Ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, Leiden 1977, 469.
36 *Ibid.*, 468.
37 The text of the *Pistis Sophia* has been recently translated once again into English: C. Schmidt (Ed.), *Pistis Sophia*. Translation and notes by V. MacDermott, Leiden 1978.
38 Cf., for a discussion of the origin and meaning of this text, our article *Erzählung und Mythos im* "Lied von der Perle", in "*Kairos*" 1/1979, 60-71, esp. 60-65. J. Daniélou, *Théologie du Judéo-Christianisme*, Tournai 1958, 306 f, gave the same interpretation to the 23rd *Ode of Salomo*, where a descensus absconditus followed by an ascensus gloriosus would be symbolically described. For a confutation of this interpretation, see H.J.W. Drijvers, *Kerygma und Logos in den Oden Salomos dargestellt am Beispiel der 23. Ode*, in *Kerygma und Logos. Beiträge zu den geistesgeschichtlichen Beziehungen zwischen Antike und Christentum*, hrgg. von A.M. Ritter, Göttingen 1979, 153-72.
39 Cf. my article "*Démonisation du cosmos*" *et dualisme gnostique*, in "*Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*" 98(1979), 3-40, esp. 8-9.
40 *Ibid.*, 12.
41 *Ibid.*, 5 n. 9.
42 W. Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*, Cambridge Mass. 1972, 361-2.
43 *Phaedrus* 248e-249a.
44 Cf. F. Boll, C. Bezold and W. Gundel, *Storia dell'astrologia*, Ital. transl. with a Foreword by E. Garin, Bari 1977, 34.
45 *Anthologia Palatina* IX 577.
46 *1 Henoch*, ch. 72-82, also called "The Book of the Courses of the Heavenly Luminaries", 147 ff Charles.
47 Cf. H. Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy, Mysticism Magic and Platonism in the later Roman Empire*, Le Caire 1956, 419.
As far as the Gnostic groups are concerned, the Phibionites of Epiphanius (*Panarion* 26, 9, 6ff) seem, however, to have performed *coitus reservatus* as a sacramental union meant to resume the passage of the soul through the 365 heavens ruled by the archons. It is difficult to state whether this was simply an *anticipation* of an experience *post mortem*, or an actual "voyage of the soul".
48 Cf. my article *Ordine e disordine delle sfere*, in "Aevum" LV (1981), 96 - 110.
49 *Ibid.*, 97.
50 *Ibid.*, 104-5.
51 Cf. J. Flamant, *Macrobe et le néo-platonisme latin, à la fin du IVe siècle*, Leiden 1977, 558ff.
52 *Ibidem*.
53 Cf. my article cit. *supra*, n. 48, 102-4.
54 Cf. ch. VII *infra*.
55 Cf. Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, edited and translated by E.R. Dodds, Oxford 1963^2, 182.
56 Cf. our article *Ordine e disordine delle sfere*, 109, and ch. VII, *infra*.
57 On the *Panaretos*, cf. *ibidem*.
58 H. Jonas, *Myth and Mysticism: A Study of Objectification and Interiorization in Religious Thought*, in *Philosophical Essays, From Ancient Creed to Technological Man*, Englewood Cliffs 1974, 292; cf. also H. Jonas, *Gnostic Religion*, Boston 1963^2, 165-7.
59 *Idem, The Gnostic Syndrome: Typology of its Thought, Imagination and Mood*, in *Philosophical Essays*, 271-2.
60 Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* I 21, 5, translated into English by J.F. Hendry, in R. Haardt, *Gnosis, Character and Testimony*, Leiden 1971, 155-6.
61 C. Schmidt and W. Till (Eds.), *Koptisch-gnostischen Schriften* I: *Die Pistis Sophia, die*

beiden Bücher des Jeû; Unbekanntes altgnostisches Werk, Berlin 1954^2.

62 E. de Faye, *Gnostiques et Gnosticisme, Etude critique des documents du gnosticisme chrétien aux II^e et III^e siècles*, Paris 1925^2, 317.

63 H. Lewy, 184.

64 H. Lewy, 190-92.

65 A. Dieterich, *Eine Mithrasliturgie* (1923^3), (reprint), Darmstadt 1966, 69-73.

66 E.g.: Pap. of Leiden J 395, XIV 31: AEHIOY♀♀♀, *apud* A. Dieterich, *Abraxas, Studien zur Religionsgeschichte des späteren Altertums* (1891), (reprint), Aalen 1973, 43.

67 *Ibid.*, 41-3. According to Nicomachus of Gerasa, the Greek vowels are musical notes and respond to the seven planets: A=Moon=d; E=Mercury=c; H=Venus=b; I=Sun=a; O=Mars=g; Y=Jupiter=f; ♀=Saturn=e. "Jene AEHIOY♀ EHIOY♀ HIOY♀ u. dgl., wie es ja fortwährend wiederkehrt, mussten etwa Tonleiterétuden in einer mystischen Singakademie gewesen sein". These musical études also occur in some Gnostic texts discovered at Nag Hammadi, e.g. in the *Gospel of the Egyptians* and in the *Discourse on the Eight and Ninth*; cf. J.M. Robinson (Ed.), *op. cit.*, 197, 204, 296.

68 On the "hekhalotic literature", see G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition*, New York 1960, 5 ff.

69 See Scholem, *Major Trends*, ch. II 2-3; I. Gruenwald, *op. cit.*, 98 ff.

70 Scholem, note 38 to ch. II.

71 *Idem, Jewish Gnosticism*, 33.

72 Cf. my "*Démonisation du cosmos*", 20.

73 Cf. my "*L'Assension de l'âme*" *dans les mystères et hors des mystères*, in U. Bianchi - M.J. Vermaseren (Eds.), *La soteriologia dei culti orientali nell'Impero Romano*, Leiden 1982, 276-302.

74 Cf. ch. VI *infra*.

75 Cf. A. Delatte, *Etudes sur la littérature pythagoricienne*, Paris 1915, 275.

76 *Metamorphoses* XI 23.

77 K.H.E. De Jong, *De Apuleio Isiacorum Mysteriorum Teste*, Leiden 1900, 111.

78 R. Merkelbach, *Roman und Mysterium in der Antike*, München-Berlin 1962, 13.

79 De Jong, 111 f.

80 *Ibid.*, 115.

81 J. Gwyn Griffiths, *Apuleius of Madauros, The Isis Book (Met. Book XI)*, Leiden 1975, 301.

82 Cf. the article of J. Bergman, in U. Bianchi - M.J. Vermaseren (Eds.), *op. cit.*, 671-708.

83 *Apud* Origenes, *contra Celsum* VI 22, vol. III 233 Borret.

84 Cf. R. Turcan, *Mithras platonicus. Recherches sur l'hellénisation philosophique de Mithra*, Leiden 1975, 48-9.

85 *Ibidem*, 54 ff.

86 Cf. U. Bianchi - M.J. Vermaseren (Eds.), *op. cit.*, 303-7.

87 Cf. my review to U. Bianchi (Ed.), *Mysteria Mithrae*, Leiden 1980, in "Aevum" LV(1981), 169a-172b.

88 Or even two exceptions (Brigetio, Bologna), where the order of the days of the planetary week is followed, with more or less slight differences in comparison with the sevenfold ladder: cf. M.J. Vermaseren, *Corpus Inscriptionum et Monumentorum Religionis Mithriacae*, vols. I-II, The Hague 1956-1960, n^o 693 and 1727.

89 Cf. ch. VII *infra*.

90 *Ibidem*.

91 Cf. my review to *Mysteria Mithrae*, 171a. On initiation in the mysteries in general, see Doro Levi, *Mors voluntaria. Mystery Cults on Mosaics from Antioch*, in "*Berytos*" 7/8 (1942), nr. 43, 19-55. Recently, M.J. Vermaseren has once again denied that the original symbolism of the mysteries of Mithra was based on sophisticated astrological speculations (cf. M.J. Vermaseren, *Mithriaca III: The Mithraeum at Marino*, Leiden 1982, 47-89; cf. my review in "*Aevum*", forthcoming). Vermaseren has systematically rejected the views expressed on this subject by A. Bausani, R. Beck, R.L. Gordon, M. Guarducci and S. Insler (see my review to *Mysteria Mithrae, cit.*).

92 Unlike A.F. Segal's *Heavenly Ascent in Hellenistic Judaism, Early Christianity and their Environment* (ANRW II 23, 2, 1333-94), this book is concerned with the principal problems

concerning the "Heavenly Ascent" that emerged from modern research. A.F. Segal's very valuable article may be used as an exposition of the principal texts related to the subject. It seems to be, however, only an introduction to this rather complicated matter.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1 M. Haug and E.W. West, *The Book of Ardâ Virâf*. The Pahlavi Text prepared by Destur Jamaspji Asa, London 1872.
2 Haug, *Introduction*, LVIII.
3 *Das Schicksal der Seele nach dem Tode nach mandäischen und parsischen Vorstellungen.* Mit einem Nachwort zum Neudruck von Geo Widengren ("Jahrbücher für protest. Theol." 18/1892, pp. 405-438; 575-603) (reprint), Darmstadt 1967.
4 M. Gaster, *Hebrew Visions of Hell and Paradise*, in "*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*" 3, London 1893, 571-611, esp. 571.
5 R. König, *A la mode. On the Social Psychology of Fashion*, tr. from German, New York 1973, 50.
6 W. Anz, *Zur Frage nach dem Ursprung des Gnostizismus. Ein religionsgeschichtlicher Versuch* ("Texte und Untersuchungen" XV, 4), J.C. Hinrichs, Leipzig 1897. 112 pp.
7 Anz, 5.
8 *Ibid.*, 74 n. 4; cf. Brandt, 12 n. 1.
9 Herod. I 181; cf. Anz, 84.
10 Anz, 84.
11 "For the third time": 1. the Mandaean massiqta; 2. the Mandaean names of the planets; 3. the Temple of Borsippa.
12 Anz, 85.
13 *Ibid.*, 86.
14 *Ibid.*, 87.
15 *Ibid.*, 88.
16 Cf. G. Widengren, *Les origines du gnosticisme et l'histoire des religions*, in U. Bianchi (Ed.), *The Origins of Gnosticism*, Leiden 1967, 37.
17 Cf. C. Colpe, *Die religionsgeschichtliche Schule. Darstellung und Kritik ihres Bildes vom gnostischen Erlösermythus*, Göttingen 1961; H.M. Schenke, *Der Gott "Mensch" in der Gnosis. Ein religionsgeschichtlicher Beitrag zur Diskussion über die paulinische Anschauung von der Kirche als Leib Christi*, Göttingen 1962.
18 W. Bousset, *Die Himmelsreise der Seele* (in "Archiv für Religionswiss." 4/1901, 136-169; 229-73) (reprint), Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt 1971.
19 Bousset, 5.
20 *Ibid.*, 22-3.
21 *Ibid.*, 38.
22 *Ibid.*, 43-50.
23 *Ibid.*, 47.
24 *Ibid.*, 52-3.
25 In the IVth chapter of his article, Bousset gives a survey of the Greek evidence concerning the psychanody. He thinks that Plato, in the apocalypse of Er, has followed an Iranian model (66). Further on, he observes (70) that "ein spezifisch griechischer Gedanke ist jene pessimistische Anschauung vom Diesseits", but he does not seem to be aware of three things: 1. that Gnostic dualism, unlike Iranian, has also a pessimistic view of the world (anticosmism); 2. that Greek dualism, although not anticosmic, resembles the Gnostic more than the Iranian form of dualism; 3. that, if an origin is to be sought, Gnostic dualism hardly could derive from the Iranian dualism.
26 W. Bousset, *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis*, Göttingen 1907, 9-57.
27 *Ibidem*, 41-5.
28 *Ibid.*, 23-39, esp. 39.
29 *Inter alia*, R. Reitzenstein, *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen nach ihren Grund-*

gedanken und Wirkungen (1927[3]) (reprint), Stuttgart 1956, 11 ff; 51-3; 74-5; 295-307, etc.

30 J. Kroll, *Gott und Hölle* (cf. note 63 *infra*), 58-9.
31 R. Bultmann, *Das Urchristentum im Rahmen der Antiken Religionen*, Zürich 1949.
32 A. Dieterich, *Mithrasliturgie*, 189-90.
33 *Inter alia*, cf. *Lux perpetua*, 143-5; 147-8; 185, etc.
34 A. Jeremias, *Handbuch des altorientalischen Geisteskultur*, Leipzig 1913, 42.
35 *Ibidem*, 44.
36 Cf. P.M.J. Lagrange, *Etudes sur les religions sémitiques*, Paris 1905[5], 192.
37 J.L. Palache, *Het heiligdom in de voorstelling der semietische volken*, Leiden 1920, 80-1.
38 Cf. also Jeremias, 45.
39 Palache, 81.
40 Herodotus I 98; cf. Bousset, *Himmelsreise*, 47.
41 *Apud* Bousset, *ibid.*, 47.
42 *Handbuch*, 45, 47, 85 f.
43 Cf. Palache, 137.
44 M. Jastrow, *The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, Boston 1898, 618.
45 Cf. Palache, 137.
46 Cf. Lagrange, 390-93.
47 So far Arnobius's informations about the Magi, and Julian's reference to "the Chaldaean" (*Or.* V 172d), both hint at the *Chaldaean Oracles*. On Arnobius, cf. my article *Le vol magique dans l'Antiquité Tardive*, in "*Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*" 98 (1981), 1, 57-66.
48 Cf. H. Jonas, *The Gnostic Syndrome*, cit.
49 E. Peterson, *Das Problem des Nationalismus im Alten Christentum*, in *Frühkirche, Judentum, Gnosis*, Rome-Freiburg-Wien 1959, 51 ff.
50 G. Quispel, *The Origins of the Gnostic Demiurge*, in *Gnostic Studies*, vol. II, Istanbul 1974, 213-19.
51 Cf. my article *The origins of Gnostic Dualism*, in R. v.d. Broek-H.J. Vermaseren (Eds.), *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions presented to G. Quispel*, Leiden 1981, 78-91.
52 Cf. U. Bianchi, *Prometeo, Orfeo, Adamo*, Rome 1976, 130 ff; cf. our review in "*Aevum*" LIII (1979), 172-76.
53 *Ibidem*.
54 H.J.W. Drijvers, *Die Ursprünge des Gnostizismus als religionsgeschichtliches Problem*, in K. Rudolph (Ed.), *Gnosis und Gnostizismus*, Stuttgart 1975, 798-841.
55 Bousset, *Hauptprobleme*, 41-2.
56 *Ibid.*, 42.
57 *Ibid.*, 28-30.
58 Boll-Bezold-Gundel, 18-19.
59 *1 Hen.* XVIII 13-16, 42 Charles.
60 Cf. H.H. Schaeder, *Urform und Fortbildungen des manichäischen Systems*, in *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg 1924-25*, Leipzig-Berlin 1927, p. 100; cf. my review to H. Jonas, *Lo gnosticismo* (Torino 1973), in "*Aevum*" LI (1975), 585-87, esp. 586.
61 *Kölner Universitäts-Reden* 27, Köln 1931.
62 *Ibid.*, 3.
63 J. Kroll, *Gott und Hölle. Der Mythos vom Descensuskampfe* (1932) (reprint), Darmstadt 1963.
64 *Ibid.*, 58.
65 *Ibid.*, 58-9.
66 *Ibid.*, 59-60.
67 *Ibid.*, 59.
68 *Ibid.*, 183-523.
69 *Ibid.*, 183-204.
70 *Ibid.*, 205-61.

71 *Ibid.*, 262-70.
72 *Ibid.*, 271-97.
73 *Ibid.*, 298 ff.
74 *Ibid.*, 300-15.
75 *Ibid.*, 316-62.
76 *Ibid.*, 363-465.
77 *Ibid.*, 466-511.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1 J.J. Bachofen, *Die Unsterblichkeitslehre der orphischen Theologie auf den Grabdenkmälern des Altertums*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. III, Basel-Stuttgart 1958, 5-209.
2 E. Rohde, *Psyche*, Engl. tr. by W.K.C. Guthrie, New York 1966, ch. 3.
3 *Ibid.*, ch. 9.
4 Cf. H. Jeanmaire, *Dionysos. Histoire du culte de Bacchus*, Paris 1951, 210 ff.
5 A. Dieterich, *Nekyia. Beiträge zur Erklärung der neuentdeckten Petrusapokalypse*, B.G. Teubner, Leipzig 1893, 16-17.
6 *Ibid.*, 225.
7 *Ibid.*, 227.
8 Bousset, *Himmelsreise*, 66.
9 *Ibid.*, 69.
10 *Ibid.*, 60 ff.
11 *Ibid.*, 62-3.
12 *Nekyia*, 117 ff.
13 K. Meuli, *Scythica*, in "*Hermes*" 70(1935), 121-76.
14 *Ibid.*, 137.
15 *Ibid.*, 153-64.
16 *Ibid.*, 159, 164-72.
17 *Ibid.*, 158.
18 E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Berkeley-Los Angeles 1951; F.M. Cornford, *Principium Sapientiae. The Origins of Greek Philosophical Thought*, Cambridge 1952.
19 Dodds, *op. cit.*, ch. 5.
20 M. Eliade, *De Zalmoxis à Gengis-Khan*, Paris 1971, 31-80.
21 H.S. Nyberg, *Die Religionen des Alten Iran*, Deutsch von H.H. Schaeder, Leipzig 1938.
22 W.B. Henning, *Zoroaster, Politician or Witch-Doctor?*, Oxford 1951.
23 W. Burkert, *Lore and Science, cit.*
24 J. Bremer, *The Early Greek Conceptions of the Soul*, Apeldoorn 1979.
25 Cf. my art. *Iatroi kai manteis, cit.*
26 *Ibid, contra* J.D.P. Bolton, *Aristeas of Proconnesus*, London 1962.
27 Paris 1915. 314 pp.
28 *Ibid.*, 129-31 and *passim*.
29 Neuchâtel 1922. 105 pp.
30 Plutarque, *Des délais de la justice divine*, Introd. and tr. by G. Méautis, Lausanne 1935.
31 Le Caire 1933. His earlier views are resumed without any modification in the booklet *La religion astrale des Pythagoriciens*, Paris 1959.
32 Rougier, *La religion astrale*, 27.
33 Cf. our *Ordine e disordine delle sfere, cit.*
34 Cf. J. Flamant, *Un témoin intéressant de la théorie héliocentrique d'Héraclide du Pont*, in M.B. De Boer-T.A. Edridge, *Hommages à M.J. Vermaseren*, Leiden 1978, vol. I, 381-91.
35 Rougier, *La religion*, 61 ff.
36 *Ibid.*, 78 ff.
37 P. Boyancé, *Etudes sur le Songe de Scipion*, Paris-Bordeaux 1936.
38 *Idem, La religion astrale de Platon à Cicéron*, in "*Revue Et. Grecques*" 65(1952), 312-49.
39 W. Burkert, *Lore*, 361-2.

40 Cf. my "*Démonisation du cosmos*", 11-12.
41 G. Soury, *La démonologie de Plutarque*, Paris 1942, 242 pp.
42 Paris 1963.
43 J. Hani, *Le mythe de Timarque chez Plutarque et la structure de l'extase*, in "*Rev. Et. Grecques*" 88(1975), 105-20.
44 Cf. my *Inter lunam terrasque, cit.*
45 G.P. Putnam & Sons, New York-London 1912. 208 pp.
46 Yale University Press, New Haven 1922. 225 pp.
47 *Astrology*, 167-202.
48 *After Life*, 27-31, 98, 158.
49 K. Reinhardt, *Kosmos und Sympathie*, München 1926, 308-76.
50 R. Jones, *Poseidonius and Solar Eschatology*, in "*Classical Philology*" 27(1932), 113-31.
51 P. Boyancé, *Etudes*, 78-104. See now M. Laffranque, *Poseidonius d'Apamée*, Paris 1964.
52 *Lux perpetua*, Paris 1949, 157-62.
53 E.A. Leemans, *Studie over den wijsgeer Numenius van Apamea met uitgave der fragmenten*, Brussels 1937.
54 R. Beutler, in "*Gnomon*" XVI (1940), pp. 111-15. Cf. Macrob. *in S. Scip.* I 12, pp. 47-50 Willis.
55 Beutler, *ibid.*
56 M.A. Elferink, *La descente de l'âme d'après Macrobe* (edited and introd. by J.H. Waszink from the mss.), Leiden 1968.
57 H. De Ley, *Macrobius and Numenius. A Study of Macrobius in Somn. I, c. 12*, ("Latomus" CXXV), Brussels 1972.
58 J. Flamant, *Macrobe*, 525-65.
59 Macrob., *in S. Scip.* I 12, 13,-14, p. 50, 11-24 Willis. Cf. Numenius, fr. 34, p. 50 and note, 116-17 Des Places. J.H. Waszink, *Porphyrios und Numenios*, esp. 77, has shown that Porphyry's animology did not undergo Numenius's influence.
60 See our *Ordine e disordine, cit.*
61 Cf. chapter VII *infra*.
62 F. Cumont, *Lux perpetua.*, 143 ff.
63 *Ibid.*, 144.
64 *Ibid.*, 147.
65 *Ibid.*, 148.
66 *Ibid*;, 150-56.

NOTES TO CHAPTERS FOUR AND FIVE

1 See W. Burkert, *Lore*; J. Bremmer, *The early, cit.*
2 Cf. H. Jeanmaire, *Dionysos*, 102; cf. 103-4.
3 *II Reg.*, 2.
4 Cf. Cornford, *Principium Sapientiae*, 118-20.
5 *Apud* Diogenes Laërtius VIII 69.
6 Cf. C. Grottanelli, *Healers and Saviours of the Eastern Mediterranean in Pre-Classical Times*, in U. Bianchi - M.J. Vermaseren (Eds.), *La Soteriologia*, 649-70.
7 Cf. M. Harner, *Hallucinogens, cit.*
8 Plutarch, *De facie* 940b-c. Other testimonies concerning the *alimos* are collected by Burkert, *Lore*, 151.
9 Cf. Méautis, *Recherches*, 8 n. 2.
10 *Fr. Gr. Hist.* 31fl, *ap.* Burkert, 151.
11 *Vita Pyth.*, 34.
12 (Reprint), San Francisco 1974.
13 W. Golden Mortimer, *ibid.*, 13, 432 and *passim*.
14 *Ibid.*, 151.
15 Cf. *supra*, ch. I 3, 1-2.

16 Herodot. IV 36; Jambl., *V. Pyth.*, 141, 73 Montoneri.
17 Cf. Diog. Laërt. VIII 40.
18 Schol. *in* Arist., *Nubes*, v. 508.
19 Plato, *Leg.* 642d.
20 Paus. II 21, 3.
21 Arist. *Ath. Pol.*, 1; Plut., *Solon*, 12; Neanthes, *apud* Athen. XIII 602c.
22 Diog. Laërt. I 114; Procl., *in Remp.* II 113 Kroll.
23 Hom., *Od.* XIX 178; Plat., *Leg.* 624b.
24 Diog. Laërt. I 114.
25 Burkert, *Lore*, p. 151.
26 Diog. Laërt. VIII 3.
27 Jambl., *V. Pyth.*, 222.
28 Herodot. IV 3 ff.
29 Maxim. Tyr. X 2; XXXVIII 3c-f.
30 Plin., *Nat. Hist.* VII 174.
31 According to Plutarch, *De genio Socr.* 592c-d, p. 167 Corlu.
32 Plin., *Nat. Hist.* VII 174,
33 Apoll., 3.
34 M. Detienne, *Les origines religieuses de la notion d'intellect; Hermotime et Anaxagore*, in "*Rev. Philosoph.*" 89(1964), 167-78.
35 Cf. W. Burkert, *Griechische Religion der archaïschen und klassischen Epoche*, Stuttgart 1977, 259.
36 Cf. J. Bremmer, *The Early*, 23.
37 Lucan. I 674 ff.
38 Diog. Laërt. VIII 51.
39 Plin., *Nat. Hist.* VII 33; cf. also Galenus, *Perì tón peponthóntôn tópôn*, VI.
40 Cf. K. Kerênyi, *Heros Iatros. Über Wandlungen und Symbole des ärztlichen Genius in Griechenland*, in "*Eranos Jahrbuch*" XII (1945), 33-54.
41 Fr. 223 Kock.
42 *Fr. Gr. Hist.* 115f392.
43 Just. XX 3.
44 Apoll., *Ep.* III 17-20.
45 Paus. III 19, 11-13; other versions are reported by Conon, Tertullianus (*de an.*, 46, 9) and Hermeias.
46 Apoll., *Ep.* III 17-20.
47 Cf. Bolton, 162-3.
48 M.P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion*, vol. I, München 1950, 383-4.
49 Schol. *ad* Pind., *Pyth.* V 10.
50 Bolton, p. 163, recalls a similar story from the *Legenda aurea*, 37.
51 *Il.* XXV 683.
52 Cf. A. Dieterich, *Nekyia*, 26 ff.
53 *Ibidem.*
54 Burkert, *Lore*, 153. After Isocrates, *Helena*, 64.
55 Plato, *Phaedrus* 243a, reporting the first three lines of the "Recantation".
56 A.H. Krappe, in "*Classical Philology*" 37(1942), 353 ff.
57 Rāmāyāna IV 43; Mahābhārata VI 7.
58 Plin., *N.H.*, IV 90; VI 55.
59 *Geogr.* VI 16, 5; VIII 24, 7.
60 *Respublica* 613e-621d; *Phaedo* 107c-114c; *Gorgias* 523a-527c.
61 *Phaedo* 107c-114c.
62 Diog. Laërt. V 91.
63 *Ibid.*, V 90. The fragments and testimonies of Heraclides Ponticus have been discussed by Petrus Hoogvliet, *Specimen Literarium Inaugurale de Vita et Scriptis Heraclidae Pontici*, Lugduni Batavorum (1858) and more recently, published by F. Wehrli, *Die Schule des Aristoteles*, vol. VII: *Herakleides Pontikos*, Basel 1953.

64 Cf. Diog. Laërt. V 6, 88.
65 Bolton, 156.
66 Bolton, 152, quoting Rohde.
67 Varro, *apud* Servius, *ad Georg.* I 34.
68 Numenius, fr. 31-35, pp. 81-7 Des Places.
69 Bolton, 152.
70 Proclus, *in Remp.* II 119 Kroll.
71 Philoponus, *ad* Aristot., *Meteor.* I 8.
72 Olympiod., *in* Plat., *Phaedr.* 238. A similar belief might be held by Charite in Apuleius's *Metamorphoses* VIII 8. The ghost of the traitor Thrasyllus would wander *inter Orcum et solem.*
73 Bolton, *loc. cit.*
74 Bolton, 151.
75 *Apud* August., *Civ. Dei*, 28=fr. 11, p. 237 Mastandrea.
76 P. Mastandrea, *Un neoplatonico latino: Cornelio Labeone*, Leiden 1978, 106.
77 Bolton, 149.

NOTES TO CHAPTER SIX

1 Cf. our *Inter lunam terrasque, cit.*
2 *De facie in orbe lunae* 940f-945d, in Plutarch's *Moralia*, vol. XII, ed. and transl. by H. H. Cherniss and W.C. Helmbold, London-Cambridge Mass. 1957, 1 ff; *De genio Socratis* 589f-592e, in Plutarch's *Moralia*, vol. VII, ed. and tr. by Ph. H. De Lacy and B. Einarson, 1959, 362 ff; *De sera numinis vindicta* 563b-568f, *ibidem*, 180 ff. For *De genio*, besides the new edition of J. Hani ("Les Belles Lettres"), A. Corlu published in 1960 this dialogue, with an Introduction and commentary superior to those of the Loeb edition (*Plutarque: Le démon de Socrate*, Paris 1960). Another recent French translation in Y. Vernière, *Symboles et Mythes dans la pensée de Plutarque*, Paris 1977 (contains the three myths, with an extensive commentary).
3 N° 181 in the Catalogue of Lamprias.
4 Vernière, 106.
5 Corlu, 61; Vernière, 106.
6 Cratinus, fr. 219= Athen. VII 325e; cf. J. Hani, *art. cit.*
7 Paus. IX 39,4; reported in the translation of P. Levi: Pausanias, *Guide to Greece*, vol. I: *Central Greece*, Harmondsworth 1979. 393-5.
8 J. Hani, 107-108.
9 J. Hani, *art. cit.*
10 *Ibidem.*
11 Cf. R.B. Onians, *The Origins of European Thought*, Cambridge 1951, 95-104, 118 f, etc.
12 Cf. A. Olerud, *L'idée de Macrocosmos et de Microcosmos dans le Timée de Platon*, Uppsala 1951, 23, 33-5, etc.
13 Cf. G. Soury, 213 n. 2.
14 *De genio* 591a (tr. De Lacy-Einarson).
15 The "secondary measures" are terrestrial days; 177 days is the interval between two moon eclipses; cf. Vernière, 170.
16 *De genio* 591c.
17 *De facie* 944c (tr. Cherniss-Helmbold).
18 Delatte, *Etudes*, 275.
19 Cf. Burkert, *Lore*, 364.
20 Cf. C.M. Edsman, *Le baptême de feu*, Uppsala 1940, 1-8.
21 Cf., on the authorship of the *Excerpta*, F. Sagnard's *Introduction* to Clément d'Alexandrie, *Extraits de Théodote*, Paris 1948.
22 *Excerpta*, ch. 38; Edsman, 29.
23 Cf. our *Inter lunam terrasque, cit.*

NOTES TO CHAPTER SEVEN

1 On the passage of the soul through the spheres in the doctrine of Bardaisan of Edessa, cf. H.J.W. Drijvers, *Bardaisan of Edessa*, Assen 1966, 151-60; *Idem, Cults and Beliefs at Edessa*, Leiden 1980, 192-3.

2 Cf. Pauli Alexandrini *elementa apotelesmatica*, edidit E. Boer (interpretationes astronomicas addidit O. Neugebauer), Leipzig 1958, ch. 23, 47 ff. The *Eisagogiká* of Paulus of Alexandria were written after 378 A.D.

3 Heliodorus, disciple of Proclus at Athens, wrote his commentary between 475-509. Cf. *In Paulum Alexandrinum Commentarium*, ed. Ae. Boer, interpret. astron. addid. O. Neugebauer et D. Pingree, Leipzig 1962, 60 ff. Cf. W. Gundel, *Sternglaube, Sternreligion und Sternorakel. Aus der Geschichte der Astrologie*, Heidelberg 1959^2, 132-4; W. Gundel and H.G. Gundel, *Astrologumena. Die Astrologische Literatur in der Antike und ihre Geschichte*, Wiesbaden 1966, 236-9.

4 See, for instance, M. Tardieu, *Trois Mythes Gnostiques*, Paris 1974, 61-69.

5 Iren. I 30, 9.

6 Orig., *c. Cels.* VI 31, pp. 86-8 Haardt. U. Bianchi (*Prolegomena* to *Mysteria Mithrae, cit.*, 36) believes, on the contrary, that the passage is related to the ascensus. This is not possible, since the 7 spheres are listed in the Chaldaean order (Saturn, Jupiter... Moon), from Saturn-Ialdabaoth, to the Moon-Horaios. Ialdabaoth, who is called "The First and the Seventh", is really "the First" from above, in the order of the creation (chronological) and in hierarchical order. But he is certainly "the Seventh", according to the normal Chaldaean order, i.e., to the distance to the earth.

7 G. Quispel, *Gnostic Man: The Doctrine of Basilides*, in *Gnostic Studies*, vol. II, 107.

8 Clem., *Strom.* II 20, 112; cf. Bousset, *Hauptprobleme*, 365.

9 Clem., *Strom.* II 20, 113, 3.

10 *Pistis Sophia*, 131, 218-19 Schmidt; cf. Bousset, *Hauptprobleme*, 366-7.

11 A.J. Festugière, *Hermétisme et mystique païenne*, Paris 1967, 20.

12 *Poimandres*, 25, p. 15, 15-16, 4 Nock-Festugière.

13 Jambl., *Myst.* VIII 6, pp. 199-200 Des Places.

14 Serv., *ad Aen.* VI 714.

15 Cf. my *Ordine e disordine, cit.*

16 *ad* VI 127; VI 439.

17 Arnob. II 16, p. 83, 16-19 Marchesi; II 28, p. 99, 16-100, 3 Marchesi.

18 E.g., pp. 16*, 10-13; 17*, 3-14; 40*, 14-16; 42*, 3-5 Bidez.

19 Cf. *Sententiae*, 29, *apud* G. Verbeke, *L'évolution de la doctrine du pneuma du Stoïcisme à S. Augustin*, Paris-Louvain 1945, 364-5.

20 Fragments 31-35 Des Places.

21 Macrob., *in S. Scip.* I 12, 13-14, p. 50, 11-24 Willis.

22 Procl., *in Tim.* I 199 and V 237 Festugière.

23 *Ad Aen.* XI 51, vol. II, 482-3 Thilo-Hagen.

24 On the *óchêma*, cf. *Proclou Diadochou Stoicheiosis Theologiké*. Proclus, *Elements of Theology*. A revised Text, with Translation. Introduction and Commentary by E.R. Dodds, Oxford 1963^2, 313-20; G. Verbeke, *op. cit.*, 352-83.

25 Dodds, 316-19.

26 Jambl., *Myst.* III 14; commentary in G. Verbeke, 374 ff.

27 *Contra Celsum* VI 22.

28 R. Turcan, *Mithras platonicus*, 54.

29 Porph., *Vita Pyth.*, 19, in *Opuscula selecta*, ed. A. Nauck (1886), reprint Hildesheim 1963, 26, 23-4; Idem, *de animatione embryonis* XI 4; Macrob., *in S. Scip.* I 13, 11; Celsus, *apud* Origenes, *c. Cels.* IV 11, 5-12, vol. II 208; IV 65, 4-7, vol. II 364; V 21, 3-7, vol. III 66; VIII 53, 2-10, vol. IV 290 Borret.

30 Macrob., *in S. Scip.* I 13, 11, p. 53, 27 f Willis.

31 *C. Cels.* IV 11, 5-12, vol. II 208 Borret; cf. Origenes's answer, *ibid.*, IV 12, 13-16, p. 212.

32 *In Tim.* 29d2-7; *Comment.*, ch. 118, pp. 162, 9-164, 3 Waszink.

33 According to Censorinus, *de die nat.* 18, 11; 39, 4-12, Aristotle would be the author of this doctrine. According to J.H. Waszink, *l.c.*, Calcidius took over critical arguments against it from Numenius of Apamea.
34 *C. Cels.* IV 65, 4-7, vol. II 346; V 21, 3-7, vol. III 66 Borret; Calcid., *in Tim.* 148, p. 185, 10-19 Waszink.
35 *C. Cels.* VIII 53, 2-10, vol. IV 290 Borret.
36 272d-e. On the interpretations of this passage, cf. Plato's *Statesman*. A Translation of the *Politicus* of Plato with Introductory Essays and Footnotes by J.B. Skemp, London 1952, 98 ff.
37 *1 Hen.* 52, 2, p. 102 Charles.
38 Bousset, *Himmelsreise*, 52.
39 *Ad* Verg. *Eclog.* V 4.
40 Cf. M.J. Vermaseren, *Mithriaca IV: Le Monument d'Ottaviano Zeno et le culte de Mithra sur le Célius*, Leiden 1978, 41.
41 Cf. A. Bausani, *Note sulla preistoria astronomica del mito di Mithra*, in *Mysteria Mithrae*, 503-11.
42 M. Guarducci, *Il graffito* Natus prima luce *nel mitreo di S. Prisca, ibid.*, 162-3.
43 *Or. Chald.*, fr. 164, p. 106 Des Places; cf. H. Lewy, 294.
44 H. Lewy, 294.
45 Psellus, *Exegesis* 1132b, p. 169 Des Places.
46 *Praep.* IX 10.
47 Cf. Chr. Elsas, *Neuplatonische und gnostische Weltablehnung in der Schule Plotins*, Berlin-New York 1975, 48 and my review in "*Aevum*" LI (1977), 189a. For another interpretation, cf. P. Mastandrea, 130.
48 *Le vol magique dans l'Antiquité Tardive*, in "*Revue de l'Hist. des Rel.*" 98(1981).
49 Schol. *in* Stat., *Theb.* IV, v. 516 *apud* J. Bidez-F. Cumont, *Les Mages hellénisés*, Paris 1938, vol. I, 226-15.
50 F. Cumont, *Lux perpetua*, 294.
51 Cf. A. Orbe, *Variaciones gnósticas sobre las alas del alma*, in "*Gregorianum*" 35(1954), 18-55.
52 *Ibid.*, 20-21.
53 According to E. Des Places, it is a doubtful testimony: fr. 217, p. 118, 4-6 Des Places.
54 Among recent contribution to the problem of the passage of the soul through the planetary spheres, two deserve a particular attention. In his *Descent of the Soul in Middle Platonic and Gnostic Theory* (see Bibliography), John Dillon comes to the conclusion that, in Middle Platonism, the cause of the descent of the soul was either a transgression or some "accident".
In his penetrating article *The Creation of Adam's Psychic Body in the Apocryphon of John* (see Bibliography), R. van den Broek kept himself busy with one of the most sophisticated forms taken, in Gnostic myth, by the descent of the soul – i.e., the creation of the physic body of Adam in the *Apocryphon Johannis*. The origin of this curious Gnostic story may be, however, based on the same source used by Aristides Quintilianus in a no less extravagant account of the descent of the soul, on which see my *Ordine e disordine delle sfere, cit.*

NOTES TO CHAPTER EIGHT

1 J.T. Millik, *The Books of Enoch*, Oxford 1976, 25 ff.
2 *Test. Levi*, 2-3.
3 Cf. G.F. Moore, *Judaism in the first centuries of the Christian Era. The Age of the Tannaim*, vol. I, Cambridge 1946, 155.
4 Cf. Scholem, *Jewish Gnost.*, 5-9.
5 Cf. Scholem, *Major Trends*, ch. II.
6 Cf. K. Rudolph, *Randerscheinungen des Judentum und das Problem der Entstehung des*

Gnostizismus, in Rudolph (Ed.), *Gnosis und Gnostizismus*, 783.
7 Cf. J. Maier, *Das Gefährdungsmotiv bei der Himmelsreise in der jüdischen Apokalyptik und "Gnosis"*, in "*Kairos*" 5(1963), 18-40, esp. 21.
8 *Ibid.*, 35. See also I. Grünwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, Leiden 1980.
9 H.H. Rowley, *The Relevance of Apocalyptic. A Study of Jewish and Christian Apocalypses from Daniel to the Revelation*, London-Redhill 1947^2, 96-7.
10 D.S. Russell, *The Method & Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*, London 1964, 66.
11 See Scholem, *opera laud.*
12 Cf. note 4 to ch. II, *supra*.
13 T. Andrae, *Mohammed. Sein Leben und sein Glaube*, Göttingen 1932, 34-42.
14 M. Asín Palacios, *La Escatologia Musulmana en la Divina Comedia, seguida de Historia y crítica de una polémica*, Madrid-Granada 1943^2, 10-18; 425-30.
15 *Ibid.*, 11-13; 425-7.
16 *Ibid.*, 14-18. Translation of the text from Bukhari and Muslim, with the other variants in footnotes, *ibid.*, 428-30.
17 *Ibid.*, 374-81.
18 Cf. P. Wunderli, *Etudes sur le Livre de l'eschiele Mahomet*, Winterthur 1965, 120.
19 E. Cerulli, *Il "Libro della Scala" e la questione delle fonti arabo-spagnole della Divina Commedia*, Vatican 1949.
20 Cf. E. Cerulli, *Nuove ricerche sul "Libro della Scala" e la conoscenza dell'Islam in Occidente*, Vatican 1972, 159-62.
21 Cf. also F. Michelini Tocci, quoted by Cerulli, *Nuove ricerche*, 6.
22 G. Widengren, *Muhammad. The Apostle of God, and His Ascension*, Uppsala 1955, 204-16.
23 A complete bibliography in connection with the *Arda Viraf Namak* and the authenticity of the traditions carried on by this writing occurs in Gh. Gnoli, *Ašavan. Contributo allo studio del libro di Ardâ Wirâz*, in *Iranica*, Napoli 1979, 387-452. The problem of Iranian "shamanism", with bibliography, is discussed by Gnoli in two other articles: *Lo stato di "maga"*, in "*AION*" XV (1965), 105-17; *Viaggio estatico e visione nella tradizione zoroastriana* (in press).

NOTES TO CHAPTER NINE

1 P. Dinzelbacher, *Die Jenseitsbrücke im Mittelalter* (Diss. Univ. Wien, 104), Vienna 1973, 162.
2 Cf. *Pons subtilis*, 311-12.
3 Cf. M.R. James, *Apocrypha Anecdota* (Texts and Studies II, 3), Cambridge 1893, 1-42.
4 P. Dinzelbacher, 36 ff.
5 There is no reason to doubt of this date.
6 Dinzelbacher, 30 ff.
7 A. Mussafia, *Sulla Visione di Tundalo*, in "Sitzungsberichte d. K. Akad. d. Wiss., Phil.-hist. Classe" LXVII, Vienna 1871.
8 Published by O. Wahl, *Apocalypsis Esdrae-Apocalypsis Sedrach-Visio Beati Esdrae*, Leiden 1977, 49-56.
9 P. Dinzelbacher, *Die Vision Alberichs und die Esdras-Apokryphe*, in "Studien u. Mitteilungen zur Geschichte des Benediktiner-Ordens u. seiner Zweige" 87 (1976), 435-42.
10 *Visio b. Esdrae*, mss. *Vat. lat.* 3838, 36a-d, pp. 54-5 Wahl.
11 *Visio Alberici* XVII, pp. 148-49 Marchand.
12 Cf. *Pons subtilis*, 304, n. 18.
13 *Ibid.*, 303-4.
14 Cf. K.H. Jackson, *A Celtic Miscellany*, Harmondsworth 1976^2, 288-95, cit. 292.
15 F. Bar, *Les routes*, 107-8.
16 Transl. in K.H. Jackson, 155.
17 P.K. Ford, *The Mabigoni and other Welsh Tales*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 1977, 129.
18 Asín Palacios, 281.

19 *Liber Scale* 36 (192), in Cerulli, *Il "Libro della Scala"*, 203.
20 Cf. H.S. Nyberg, *op. cit.*, 185.
21 Cf. N. Söderblom, *La vie future d'après le Mazdéisme, à la lumière des croyances parallèles dans les autres religions. Etude d'eschatologie comparée*, Paris 1901, 90-95.
22 Cf. Ph. Gignoux, *L'Enfer et le Paradis d'après les sources pehlevies*, in "Journal Asiatiques" CCLVI (1968), 222-4.
23 Cf. *Die Esra-Apokalypse (IV. Esra)*, I: *Die Überlieferung*, hrgg. von Bruno Violet, Leipzig 1910, pp. XIII-XV; *Die Apokalypsen des Esra und des Baruch* in deutscher Gestalt hrgg. von B. Violet (and H. Gressmann), Leipzig 1924, XXXI, XL, XLIX.
24 Lat. VII 6-8, p. 128 Violet; cf. Lat. VII 11-14, pp. 130-1 Violet.
25 *Historia Francorum*, 33.
26 *Dial.* IV 36.
27 I. Scheftelowitz, *op. cit.*, 180.
28 *IV Esra* Lat. VII 80-7, pp. 174-8 Violet; cf. 92-98, 180-6 Violet.
29 Cerulli, *op. cit.*, 239-40 n. 199. These are the names of the "infernal lands" in the *Liber Scale* and in al-Kisa'i and Ibn 'Abdalbarr: Aranka (ar-Ramaka), Halgelada (halada, jalada), Area ('araqa), alhubra (al-harba, al-jarba'), malca (maltam, malta), zahikika (sijjin), hagib ('ajiba).
30 Asín, 138-9. Hadit of Ibn Yurayi (Khazin, *Tafsir* III 96-7): Yahannam (=Gehinnom), Lazi, al-hatma, al-sa'ir, saqar, al-yahim, al-hawiya; hadit of Abd Allah b. 'Umar (Ta'labi, *Qisas*, 4): Adim, Basit, Taqil, Batih, Hayn, Masika, al-sakhar (and at-tara).
31 J.L. Palache, *Het heiligdom*, 123.
32 Cf. H. Bietenhardt, *Die himmlische Welt im Urchristentum und Spätjudentum*, Tübingen 1951, 37-41: Heled, Thebel, Arqa, Yabasha, Haraba, Adama, the bottom.
33 'Araqa, halada, harba, adim ("surface") correspond to the Hebrew Arqa, Heled, Haraba, Adama.
34 Cf. Gruenwald, *op. cit.*, 134. Other cosmological speculations concerning the seven earths occur in *Beraita de-Ma'aseh [illegible]shit* (ed., with a French transl., by N. Sed, in "*Revue des Etudes Juives*" 124/1965) and in *Midrash Konen*.
The names of the seven subterrestrial earths in *Re'uyot Yehezkel* are: 'Adamah, 'Erets, Heled, Neshiyah, Dumah, She'ol, Tit Ha-Yaven. This tradition is obviously the source of the seven earths in the Arab legends of *mi'râj*.
35 *Visio b. Esdrae*, mss. Linz, 36a-d, pp. 54-5 Wahl.
36 Cf. D. Campbell, *Arabian Medicine and its Influence on the Middle Ages*, vol. I, London 1926 (reprint New York 1973), 122-23.
37 *Ibidem*, 123.
38 *Ibidem*.

INDEX NOMINUM RERUMQUE

I. *Auctores moderni*

Andrae, T. 56
Anz, W. 17, 18, 20
Asín Palacios, M. 56, 58

Bachofen, J.J. 24
Bergman, J. 14
Beutler, R. 30
Bolton, J.D.P., 41, 42
Bousset, W. 5, 15, 18-23, 25, 26, 53
Boyancé, P. 27, 28, 30
Brandt, W. 16, 17, 19
Bremmer, J. 27
Bultmann, R. 19
Burkert, W. 27, 29

Campbell, D. 62
Cerulli, E. 57, 61
Cherniss, H. 35
Collins, J.J. 5, 6
Colpe, C. 1
Cornford, F.M. 26
Cumont, F. 19, 26, 28, 29-31

De Faye, E. 13
De Jong, K.H.E. 14
Delatte, A. 14, 27, 28
De Ley, H. 30
Detienne, M. 27, 29, 37
Dieterich, A. 24-26, 38
Dinzelbacher, P. 58
Drijvers, H.J.W. 21

Elferink, M.A. 30
Eliade, M. 26

Festugière, A.J. 30
Flamant, J. 28, 30

Gaster, M. 16, 56
Golden Mortimer, W. 36
Grottanelli, C. 35
Gruenwald, I. 61
Gwyn Griffiths, J. 14

Hani, J. 29, 44
Harner, M.J. 7
Haug, M. 16
Helmbold, W.C. 36
Henning, W. 26
Hoelscher, G. 35

Jastrow, M. 20
Jeremias, A. 20
Jones, R. 30

Krappe, A.H. 38
Kroll, J. 19, 22, 23

Leemans, E.A. 30
Lewy, H. 53, 54

Maier, J. 55
Mastandrea, P. 42
Méautis, G. 27-29
Merkelbach, R. 14
Meuli, K. 26
Millik, J.T. 55
Mussafia, A. 58

Nyberg, H.S. 26

Palache, J. 20, 61
Peterson, E. 20
Pope, J.A. 16

Quispel, G. 1, 20

Reinhardt, K. 30
Reitzenstein, R. 16, 18, 19
Rohde, E. 24-26
Rougier, L. 27-29

Schaeder, H.H. 22, 26
Scheftelowitz, I. 60
Schenke, H.M. 1
Scholem, G. 7
Soury, G. 27, 29

Turcan, R. 14, 52, 53
Turner, J.D. 9

Vermaseren, J.M. 53
Vernière, Y. 43

Wahl, O. 61
Waszink, J.H. 30
West, E.W. 16
Widengren, G. 16, 57
Wunderli, P. 57

Zaehner, R.C. 7

II. *Auctores antiqui*

Abraham alfaqim 56
Alberic of Montecassino 58, 61, 62
Apollonius 37
Apuleius 14
Archimedes 28
Aristotle 28
Arnobius 30, 50, 54
At-Talabi 61
Azraki 61

Basilides 11, 30, 48, 49
Bonaventura of Siena 57
Bukhari 56

Calcidius 52
Callippus of Cyzicus 28
Celsus 14, 15, 17, 20, 48, 49, 52
Chrétien of Troyes 59
Cicero 30
Cieza 36
Clearchus of Soloi 41, 42
Clement of Alexandria 25
Cornelius Labeo 41, 42
Crantor 28
Cratinus 38, 43
Cronius 30, 50

Damascius 50
Daraqutni 56
Dicearch 43
Diogenes Laërtius 37, 40

Empedocles of Acragas 1, 10, 21, 25, 35-37
Epiphanius of Salamis 8
Eudoxus of Cnidus 28

Firmicus Maternus 8

Gregory of Tours 60, 61
Gregory the Great 60, 61

H. of Saltrey 7, 59
Heliodorus (disciple of Proclus) 46
Heraclides Ponticus 28, 37, 38, 40-43
Heraclitus 10
Hermeias 50
Hippobotus 35

Ibn 'Abbas 56, 61
Ibn 'Abdalbarr 61
Ibn 'Asakir 56
Ibn Hanbal 56
Ibn Ishaq 56
Irenaeus of Lyon 9, 48
Ishaq b. Wahb 56

Isidorus 11, 30, 48, 49

Jamblichus 37, 49, 50
Juan Andrés de Játiva 57
Julian the Chaldaean 48, 53
Julian the Theurgist 48, 53

Ka'b al-Akbar 61
Kisa'i 61

Lucanus 37

Macrobius 12, 30, 50, 52
Manethon (Pseudo-) 50
Marc of Munster 58
Maximus of Tyrus 37
Megasthenes 39
Michael Psellus 7, 53
Muslim 56

Numenius of Apamea 12, 30, 48, 50

Olympiodorus 40, 50

Parmenides 35
Paulus of Alexandria 46
Pausanias 36, 43, 45
Peter the Venerable 56
Petrus Diaconus 62
Philoponus 40
Plato 1, 2, 7, 10, 24-30, 39, 41, 44, 46, 53, 54
Pliny 37-39
Plotinus 50, 54
Plutarch 7, 26, 27, 29, 36, 43-47
Porphyry 12, 30, 50, 53
Posidonius of Apamea 26, 28, 30, 43
Priscianus 50
Proclus 12, 30, 40, 41, 50
Ptolemaeus 39
Pythagoras of Samos 1, 25, 28, 36, 37, 40

Rodrigo Jimènez de Rada 56, 57

Sa'id ibn Mansur 56
Servius 12, 30, 40, 46, 49
Simplicius 50
Stesichorus 39

'Umar ibn Sulayman 56

Varro 41

Wahb ibn Munabbih 61

Xenocrates 25, 28

III. *Alia nomina*

Abaris 1, 24-26, 40
Aeacus 36
Aitiopis 38
Aletus Livius 7
Anaxagoras 10
Apollo 25
Aqiba b. Joseph 55
Arday Viraz 7, 16, 57
Ardiaeus 45
Aridaeus 45
Aristeas of Proconnesus 7, 24-27, 39, 40
Armenios 7

Babel 17
Bakis 36
Battus 38
Blavatsky, Mme 27
Borsippa 18, 19

Cantharidae 37
Cheronea 43
Christ 9, 22
Cinvat 60
Clenoymus 41
Cocytus 45
Cyrene 38

Delphi 43
Demeter 43
Dionysos 11, 24
Dioscuri 38

Eliezer b. Hirkanos 55
Empedotimus 40-42
Epimenides of Crete 1, 25, 35, 36, 39, 40, 42
Er 1, 7, 25, 39
Erinyes 41
Etna 35

Greece 24
Girardo (abbott) 62

Hades 41, 43, 45
Hecate 45
Herkyna 43
Hermotimus of Clazomenae 24, 25, 37, 40, 42
Hyperborea 38

India 29
Iran 18, 26

Isis 14

Jesus 9

Kipling, R. 27
Kronos 43

Lamprias 43, 45
Lebadea 43
Leonymus of Athens 38
Lethe 41
Leucades 38
Leuké 38
Lykia 38

Minos 36
Mithra 14, 15, 53
Mohammed 2, 57

Nag Hammadi 9

Pedro de Heredia 36
Persephone 14, 46
Persia 28
Peru 36
Phormion 38
Pleiads 21
Pyriphlegeton 45

Sagra 38
Salerno 61
Simon Magus 17
Socrates 44
Solon 36
Styx 2, 45, 46

Telephus 38
Thespesius 45
Thrace 24
Timarch of Cheronea 44
Trophonius 43, 44

Yismael 55
Yohannan b. Zakkay 55

Zalmoxis 26
Zeus 36, 37, 43
Zoroaster 26

IV. *Res*

abstinence 35
acousma 10
anticosmism 21
antimimon pneuma 49
antisemitism 20
antisomatism 21
apnous 37
apocalypse 2, 5-8, 16, 25, 33, 44, 55
Arabic legends 2
Archaic Greece 7
archons 12, 48
ascension 20, 25, 33, 50, 54
ascensus 5, 8, 22, 50
astrology 2, 10

badge 11, 13
bridge 60,-62

catabasis 8
catalepsy 37
Chaldaeans 28, 30
chiromancy 7
Copernican revolution 1
cosmic mountain 20
customs (heavenly) 12, 13, 15

Demiurge 12, 13, 20
demonization of the cosmos 19
descensus 5, 22, 50
descent 12, 22, 50, 54
drugs ingestion 7, 35
dualism 20, 25

earth 2, 9, 21, 41, 42
elevation 14, 18
erlöste Erlöser 8
eschatology 6, 18, 26, 40, 41, 43
extasy 18, 24, 38

Gnosticism 8, 11, 17-19, 21
gods 10, 22, 37

hadit 56
heaven 2, 17, 18, 21, 25, 55
heavenly ascension 1, 2
heimarmene 49
hekhaloth 2, 7, 14, 55
hell 2, 25, 40, 41
Hermetic astrology 10, 47
hero 10, 22, 39
Himmelsreise der Seele 1, 5, 10, 15, 18, 22 24, 26
Hungerbane 36

iatromantes 1, 26, 36, 40
incubation 7, 44
Isles of the Blessed 38, 39, 46
isra' 56

Jewish mysticism 2

kleroi 46, 48

ladder 57
Late Antiquity 2, 11, 18, 20, 22, 24-26, 30, 42, 52
laserpitium 38
loci see *kleroi*

Magi 28, 54
Magic Papyri 11, 13
Mandaeans 17, 21
masbuta 17
massiqta 17
medicine-man 26, 35
Medieval apocalypses 2, 58-62
merkabah 7, 14
mithraeum 15
mi'raj 55, 56
Moon 45, 46
mysteries 11, 14, 15
mystes 14
myths of Plato 2

nebi'im 35

ochema 12, 49, 50, 52

paradise 39, 55
parts - see *kleroi*
phenomenology of religion 23
physiognomy 7
planetary spheres 2, 11, 15, 48, 54
planets 10, 11, 14, 17, 21, 27, 50, 53
purgatory 29
purifier 36

reincarnation 14
Religionsgeschichtliche Schule 1, 15-17, 19, 24

salvator salvandus 8
salvator salvatus 8
saviour 2, 8, 49
seal 11, 13, 54
seer 7
sevenfold ladder 14, 17-20, 52, 53

sexual intercourse 35
shaman 26
shamanism 24, 44
silphium- see *laserpitium*
sirat 61
sortes - see *kleroi*
soul 1, 5, 9-12, 14, 15, 17, 25, 29, 33, 37, 41, 48, 49
Spirit (Holy) 9
Sun 46
sutura frontalis 44
symbolon 13, 14, 17, 52, 53
synthema 13

theios aner 26
theoxeniai 38

underworld 22

vehicle of the soul - see *ochema*

watchwords 13

yoga 24
yorede merkabah 7

ziqqurat 19, 20
Zoroastrianism 20